A NEWSFIELD PUBLICATION
No.38 MARCH 1987
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CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM



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RANARAMA
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ISSUE NO.38 March 1987

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DIY

FEATURES

REGULARS

Not quite the Ides of March, but 26th March is a significant date: look out for the April CRASH on that day!



T H E ·

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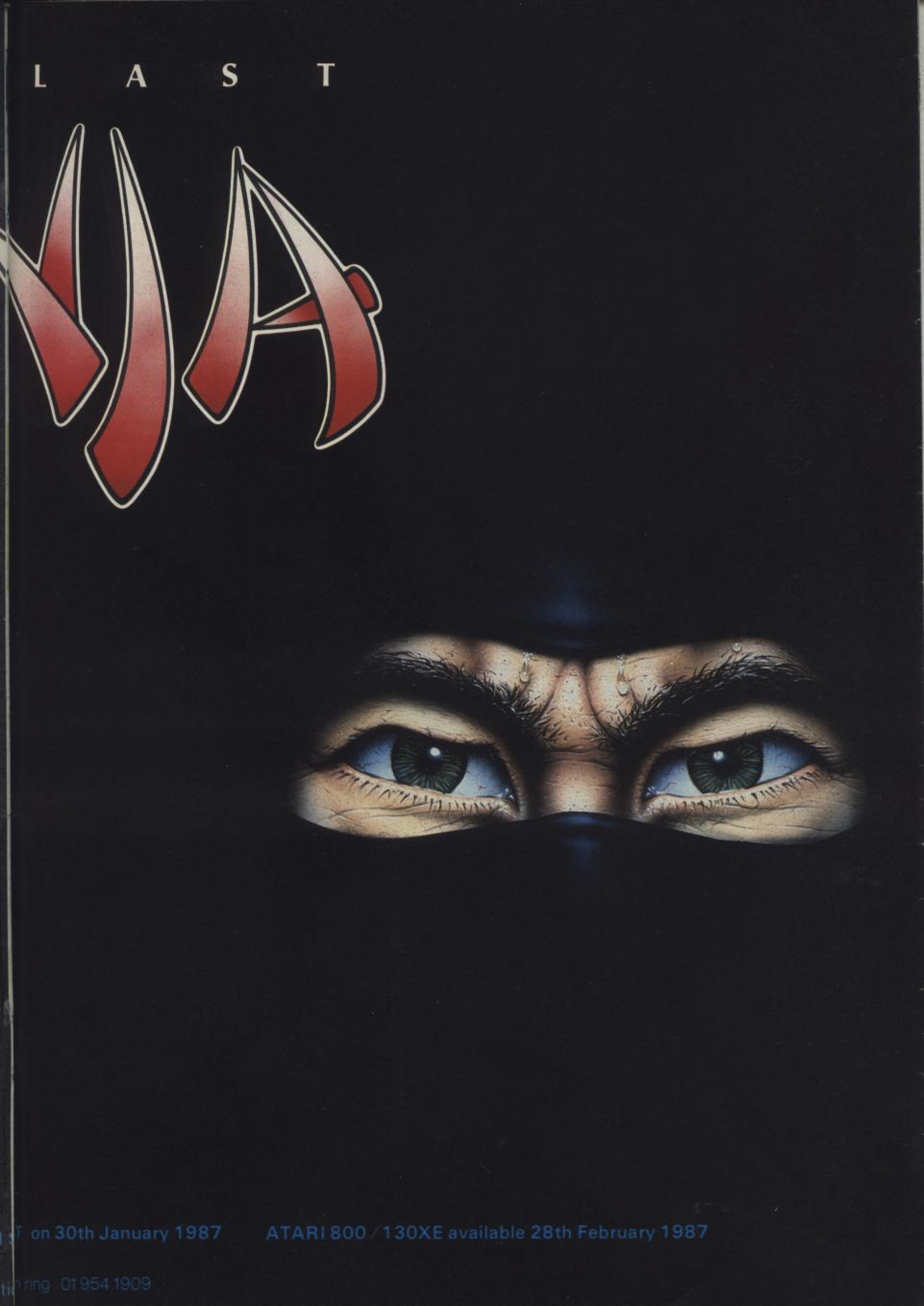


actual CBM 64 screens

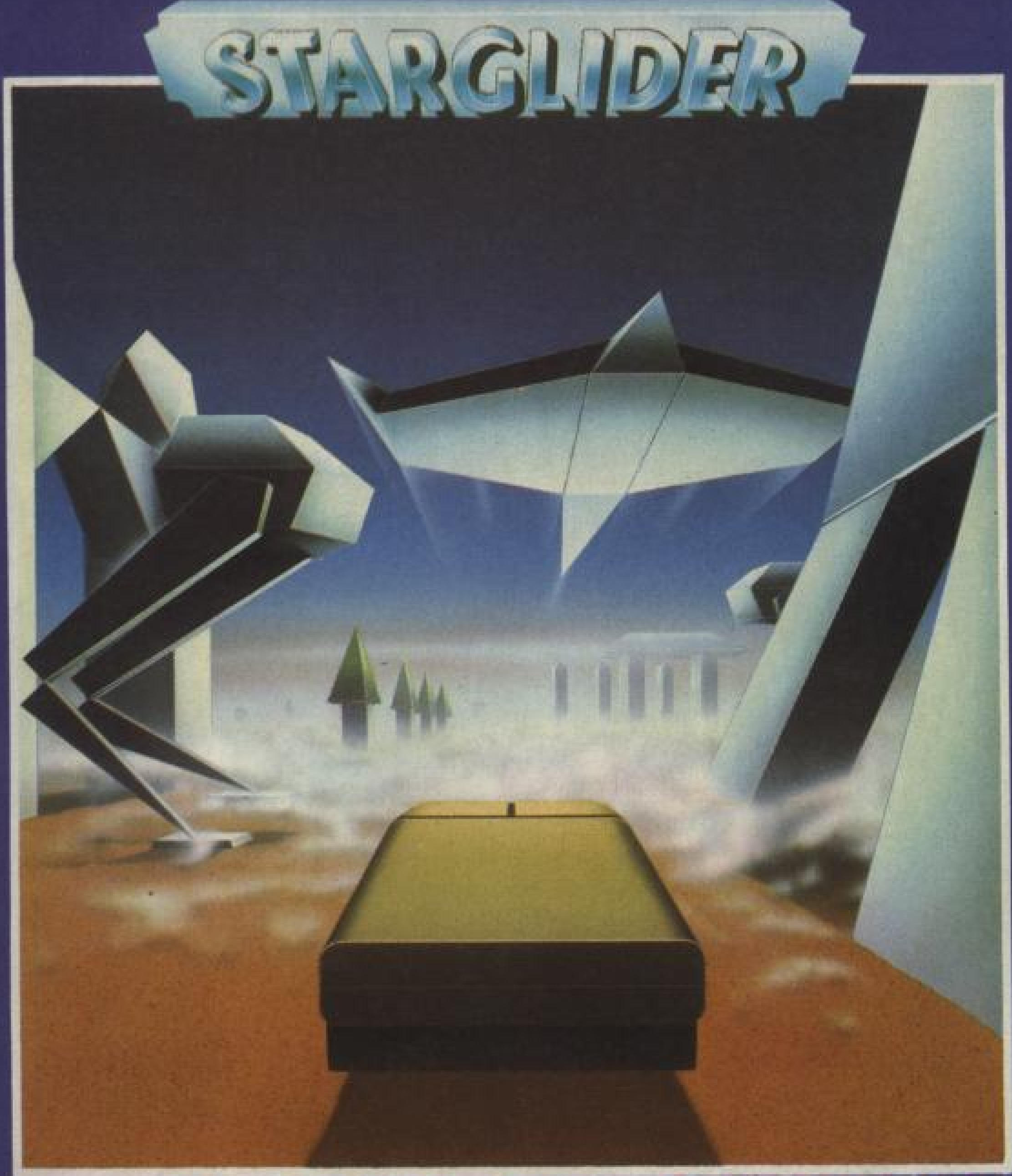
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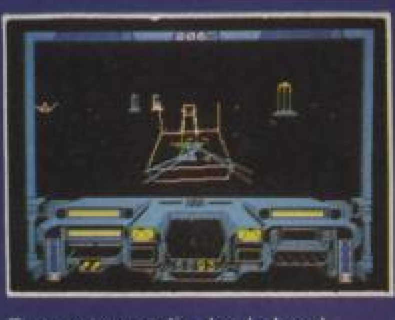
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SENT TO CONQUER - MACHINE VERSUS MAN

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Defeat the elusive Starglider in an amazing all-action combat flight simulation. The planet Novenia has been devastated by an evil tide of invading Egrons; single-handed, you must wipe out the enemy in explosive one-to-one combat. Swooping down with lasers blazing, you'll need to take fast evasive action to avoid the barrage of enemy missiles. Exhilarating low-level attack and defence flight manoeuvres, coupled with a cunning strategic element, make STARGLIDER a classic among classics.



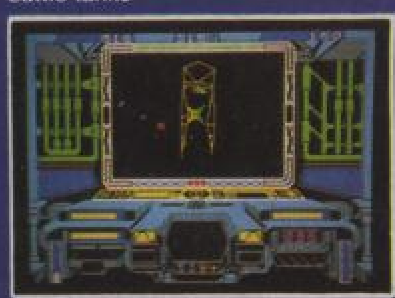
Energy towers lie dead ahead defended by heavily armed Egron battle tanks



A Stomper and Walker close in. Laser fire is futile against these metal monsters



The Walker attacks. Bank your craft to evade the lasers and prepare to fire



Missile launched! Steer your TV-guided missile on target to annihilate the invader



The Starglider swoops in to attack. Several direct hits are needed to destroy it



A special mission. A devastating super missile has been located in the ruins of Novenia

Screenshots taken from Spectrum 48/128 version

GAME OF THE YEAR

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CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

The home computer software industry seems to be following the model that astronomers use for the life cycle of stars.

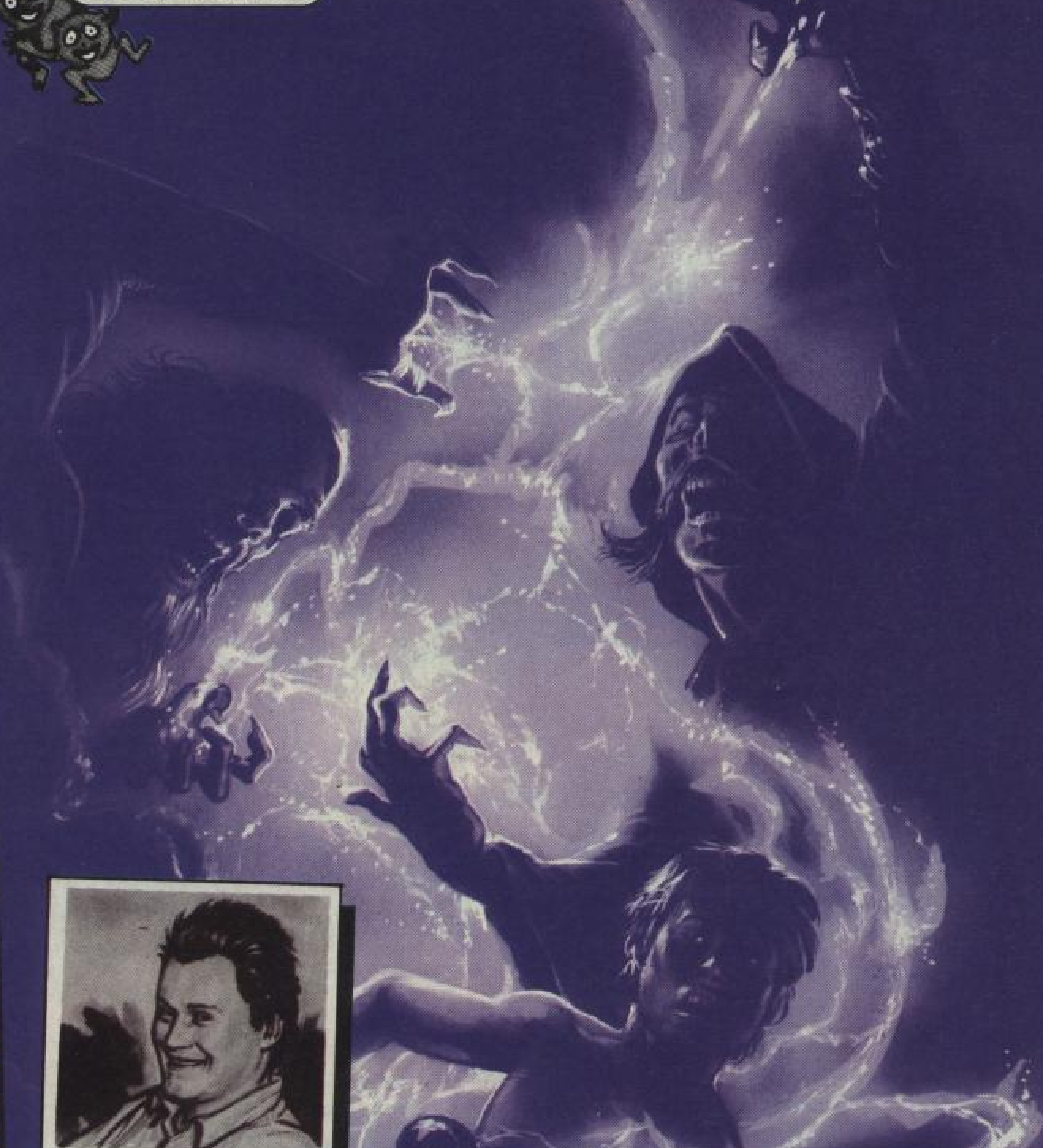
A mature star consists of a solid nucleus surrounded by burning gases which give off a considerable quantity of energy, including heat and light. A couple of years ago, the home computer industry consisted of a large number of small, independent firms, all highly active and all releasing games left, right and centre. A few larger companies sat in the middle of the industry providing an anchor – this nucleus included the larger software concerns, independent distributors and a couple of retail chains.

The next stage of a star's life is the Red Giant phase, when the matter surrounding the nucleus begins to run out. About a year ago, the innovative qualities of games for the Spectrum began to dwindle, and apart from a few bursts of imaginative design, the glow of exciting new games subsided as licence deals took over. Games designers and programmers started working to a formula, producing clone upon clone. Many of the small companies disappeared, and the nucleus grew more solid.

Then comes the Supernova stage, when most of the matter that surrounds the nucleus of a star is ejected (spot the bankruptcies). After the Supernova comes the White Dwarf, when the matter making up the star collapses in onto the nucleus – which in turn becomes more more dense as it absorbs material and condenses.

This is the stage the British games industry has now reached – a handful of large concerns have all but absorbed the smaller companies. The latest news sees MASTERTRONIC absorb MELBOURNE HOUSE and MIRRORSOFT take PSS into the corporate fold. And of course MIKRO-GEN took cover in the CSD group some months ago.

How many independent companies remain active in the market now that the major concerns are acting like Black Holes, attracting talent and the competition into their depths? They can be counted on the fingers of one hand – ignore the thumb. Only a couple of companies



Graeme Kidd

remain truly independent, sourcing and publishing their own products.

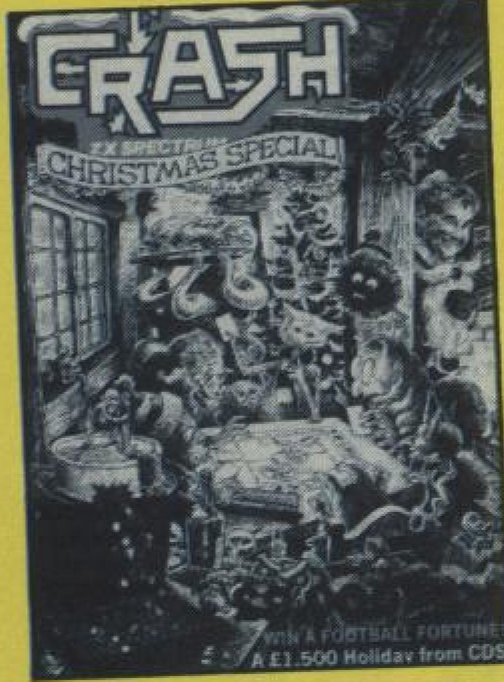
The only hope for originality and innovation lies in the emergence of a system that parallels the book publishing industry, where authors tout their wares around the large publishers. Some companies, like CANVAS, DENTON DESIGNS, BINARY DESIGN and DESIGN DESIGN are already 'packaging' products for the larger concerns, and a thriving market for freelance programmers exists.

The only drawback is that the large marketing-oriented combines can exert an undue influence on the market – given their powerful relationship with the distributors and retail chains. With less choice available, the customer may have to put up with the games that marketing people decide will sell. The recent spate of licensed games and tie-ins, nearly all of them mediocre, could be an indication of things to come. Is innovation squashed out of the equation when corporations control the home computer software industry? Let's hope that imagination isn't sucked into the resulting Black Hole.

1987 BACKNUMBERS

No 36: Xmas 1986/1987
Another dose of traditionally festive fun, this year accompanied by Issue 0 of **LM** *and containing a peek behind the scenes in Grovel Hill, where they make the magazine that bears Lloyd's initials. Lloyd himself looks back over 1986 giving a resume of the games we all played. Mel Croucher begins the saga of TAMARA KNIGHT: Part One of the tale of a fast-food salesbeing of the future is accompanied by Part Two. Simon Goodwin finds that it isn't just Spectrum owners who are playing Spectrum games . . . Apart from the usual regular features, we talked to the DENTON DESIGNers and found out about the split, reviewed Kat Trap, the GENESIS game and looked at musical add-ons. Not forgetting the definitive CRASH Index for 1986 and the NEWSFIELD Reviewers' Challenge . . .*

Maps included *Infiltrator*, Level One of *Scooby Doo*, all of *Heartland, The Great Escape*, and *Druid*.



No 37: February 1987
The man behind JETMAN is interviewed and reveals a few of his dark secrets, and we reveal the dark secrets of the trio of reviewers chained up in the CRASH Dungeon. TAMARA KNIGHT continues her adventures, as does Franco Frey in the world of Video Digitisers. The full match report on the Match Day Challenge is given, in which we tell how one of the programmers responsible for the classic game ended up 'sick as a parrot'. Games mapped in February included part of *Fairlight II*, all of *Firelord, Avenger* and *Dandy*.

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REVALUING THE CRASH CURRENCY

Following on from the ratings changes announced last month, we've decided to complete the task of revamping the way in which our (named) reviewers evaluate games.

The general reaction to the changes we've already made is favourable – quite a few people have written to Lloyd telling him that it was the Right Thing To Do. Over the past year or so, the general standard of games has improved steadily which has led to a degree of polarisation in the percentages that our reviewers have been awarding. So as of this month, we've reappraised the way in which percentages are awarded, and taken the opportunity to remind ourselves that an average game should score around 50%

Games can only really be judged in the light of the current standard of releases – for instance, had Starglider 128 been released eighteen months ago it would have been difficult for any percentage system to cope. (And for any Spectrum to cope, but you get the drift of the argument.) A more even spread of percentage ratings should be the outcome of rejuvenating our percentage policy, and fewer games should be bunched together at either end of the scale.

One final upgrade is planned – and with luck we should have implemented it in time for next month. While some software houses make it clear that an enhanced version of a game is included on the cassette for the benefit of 128K and Plus 2 owners, quite a few games offer additional facilities, or 'work' better on the Plus 2 than they do on the basic Spectrum – the sound on MASTERTRONIC's *180* for instance.

So as of next month, Ben Stone will be providing a small panel to go with every mainstream game review, pointing out any additional features that 128K and Plus 2 owners are likely to find when they load up.

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

INDEX TO GAMES REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE


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KERRASH!

N·E·W·S I·N



The shape of things to come? A miniature robot views the exhibits at the Earl's Court Toy Fair



LASERS LASERS EVERYWHERE!

Every year, buyers for the major stores and local toyshops in the South of England get together at the Earl's Court Toy Fair and decide what to order for the 1987 Christmas market. This year it was overrun by Lasers.

There were lasers that fired at each other, some that fired at tanks, others that fired at targets and those that fired at television screens. What's more – there wasn't a single laser in the entire exhibition!

Confused? well so was I! The story goes along these lines: this year the toy industry has decided that you and I are all going to buy 'laser' guns for Christmas. But none of these 'laser' toys feature real lasers – instead they use a system like the one used in a television remote control.

Several games of this type will be available later this year, including *Laser Gun* from BAN DAI, *Zillion* from MATCHBOX, and *Laser Combat* from ACTION GT. With this type of gun you need two players for maximum fun. The one with the gun goes seeking after the target wearer, and fires at him whenever the target is in view.

The final variation on the theme was the *Laser Challenge*, which is the nearest that the toy companies have yet come to making an arcade game. This package contains a gun and a video tape. This tape depicts a number of moving characters which you attempt to shoot. Scoring is registered on the gun itself, with different colours indicating differing values.

There were other new games on show besides the lasers. There were dolls by the million, including cassette-based models with lips that talk in time to the words on the cassette. As you'd expect there were cuddly bears by the hundred – but what I didn't expect was a cuddly computer screen. MB GAMES were showing *Animator*, an LCD screen which allows you to draw and animate pretty pictures. I suppose that it's a cross between *The Art Studio* and an *Etch-a-Sketch* – but not half as much fun!

There were a couple of computers at the show. The first was the NINTENDO *Games Console* on the MATTEL stand, and the other was on the stand of the only mainstream computer manufacturer at the show – ATARI.

The NINTENDO made a huge impact in Japan last year, and a few software houses are already planning to support this machine when it starts to sell in Europe. This console has special cartridges that use a robot assistant (R.O.B. – your Robotic Operating Buddy!) to help you play the game.

I asked for a demonstration of this system using the robot assistant, and have never seen anything so complicated and difficult in all my life. The product manager assigned to do the demo was in real trouble – he had to keep talking at the same time as changing screens, moving the robot up and down, spinning the gyroscopes and moving the little man on the screen. Sounds like just the sort of game we could use for a reviewer's challenge . . .

ATARI were proudly displaying their 2600 games console – yes it's that machine again, the original ATARI. They also had the *130XE* computer, newly described as a *Games Computer* and the brand new *65XE Games Computer*.

What is particularly interesting about this machine is that it is basically an ATARI computer with a cartridge socket and no keyboard, but it can be built up into a full computer system with a range of add-ons available.

In all there was plenty to see at this year's fair, and plenty that you will be seeing on Television later in the year.

Mark Seeley

MERGER MANIA

Budget masters MASTERTRONIC are entering the 'full-price' market with a bang – they've just bought MELBOURNE HOUSE.

The details are secret, but **MELBOURNE HOUSE** claim they were paid a seven-figure sum – making this one of the biggest takeover deals in the history of the industry (in financial terms, at least).

Both houses plan to publish software under their own names; and BEAM SOFTWARE, a separate company owned by the founders of MELBOURNE HOUSE and responsible for many of MELBOURNE's products, will carry on developing programs for the label.

MASTERTRONIC has been looking to acquire a 'full-price' software house for some time, a company spokesman said, and they were impressed by **MELBOURNE HOUSE**'s product plans.

But this doesn't mean MASTERTRONIC will change their own policy on budget games.

MASTERTRONIC are setting up a new arcade-games division, ARCADIA SYSTEMS INC. This will concentrate on making coin-op video games – but ARCADIA's arcade games could find their way into MASTERTRONIC's product range.

MIRRORSOFT are empire-building, too. Their parent company, PERGAMON PRESS has acquired two US software houses, SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE INC and NEXA CORPORATION. And, closer to home, the group has conquered wargames specialists PSS.

Gary Mays, joint managing director of PSS, is happy about the move – it'll give his company guaranteed distribution and financial security for new projects, he says.

PSS plans include *Battlefield Germany*, a wargame set at the beginning of World War III in Europe, and *Bismark*, a simulation of the famous World War II naval action.

They're also planning a Spectrum version of *Tobruk* that will be playable by two people, each sitting at their own machine networked through the joystick port. The Spectrum version should feature an arcade sequence, and is intended to appeal to a much wider market than the wargamers who have traditionally been the main supporters of PSS games.





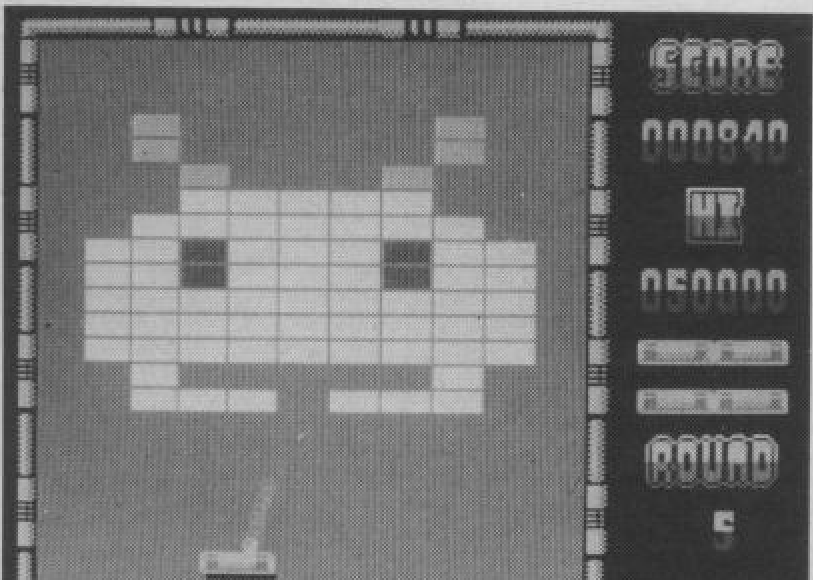
OUT AND DOWN!

Two games until now only available at full price have been rereleased on budget labels. **VIRGIN**'s *Falcon Patrol II* has resurfaced on the £1.99 **BUG BYTE** label and *Willow Pattern* has gone from **SUPER SILVER** to **SILVER** – getting a pound cheaper in the process.



Mark Smith, winner of the **HEWSON** *City Slicker* competition sits at the feet of his hero, Daley Thompson – well actually a waxwork of the world-champion breaking decathlete at Madame Tussaud's. Mark was treated to a whirlwind tour of London, escorted by our very own Girlie Tipster Hannah Smith and the wonderful Julia Coombs from **HEWSON**.

LATE ARRIVAL



Arkanoid from **OCEAN** arrived just too late for review. It's a micro version of the arcade hit and marks the return to popularity for *Breakout*-type games.

Breakout originally appeared in the dim and distant past at the dawn of the arcade industry. *Arkanoid* adds lots of extra features, including aliens, indestructible bricks, bricks that only disappear after three hits, and bricks that release bonus pods. Hitting a bonus pod causes changes . . . the bat may grow larger, turn into a laser or become sticky, and sometimes you can choose to go on to the next level.



A WH Smiths Data Recorder with the LOAD IT azimuth adjuster

LOADING ERRORS

The end of tape azimuth problems is in sight according to **LOAD–IT**.

If you send them your cassette deck together with £9.95 they'll fit a little azimuth-tweaking knob before sending it back. Then, when a tape fails to load, you can twiddle the azimuth knob until you get the clearest tone from the loudspeaker. A scale around the knob can be used to read off the optimum setting for that game – make a note of the number on the inlay card, and the azimuth knob can be set to the best position whenever that game is loaded again.

LOAD IT are at 35 Stretton Road, Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands. To find if your make of tape recorder can take the **LOAD IT** treatment, phone 021–745–4970.

GOING SWIMMINGLY

After a short lull in their packed schedule of releases, **PIRANHA** are getting ready to launch another batch of games into the Spectrum universe.

Don Priestley, creator of *Popeye* and *Trapdoor*, is developing another game in which Berk has to get to work – *Trapdoor II*.

A game based on the Royal Family is on the drawing board, too, as well as the official Yogi Bear licensed game, scheduled for summer release. The top talents of **DELTA 4** are going to work on a spoof adventure, *The Great American Detective*, and Piranha have acquired two more licences – Judge Death and Roy of the Rovers.

GENESIS II

If something's worth doing well, it's worth doing again!

That could be the motto of the GENESIS design-a-game contest we ran together with **DOMARK** last year. And now, following the Christmas success of the first GENESIS game (*Kat Trap*), comes another winner – *The Sewer*, from 16 year-old **Martin Lee** of Exeter.



Martin visited **DOMARK**'s South London HQ to discuss his plan with Graham Stafford of **DESIGN DESIGN**, who'll be responsible for the programming.

The game's a blend of subterranean strategy and arcade action – you race against time to rescue workmen trapped by rising water, acid and the unfriendly rats and leech4es of the underworld.

Graham Stafford will be coding on the Amstrad – he reckons it makes conversions easier – but don't worry. *The Sewer* will be rleased for the Spectrum too.

Read all about it in AMTIX! magazine, which borrowed our man Minson to sit in on that first brainstorming session. He came away burbling something about a classic in the making . . .



MINSON AND THE FREUDIAN GYMSLIP

Does Christmas never end? HEWSON obviously think not – so I boycotted their January bash in protest. But that still left me time to be caned by Dave Carlos, AND get slightly the better for drink with the delightful Amanda Barry.

January means out with the old and in with the new. Out with the Christmas parties and in with the New Year orgies. Except for those weird people at HEWSON!

Remember how they began celebrating Christmas at the PCW show in September? Well, they realised the error of their ways and held another Christmas party, this time in early January. Now they could be Ukranians, who celebrate the festive season about two weeks later than everyone else. Or maybe it's just a ploy to confuse poor, befuddled hacks like me.

Anyway, I didn't make it, I'm afraid. Anyone who read about my leaky roof last time won't want further grisly details of the structural horrors that kept me away from the launch of *Impossaball*, **Andrew**'s speech and the truly wonderful **Julia Coombes**! Apologies all round.

Luckily I escaped the Curse of the Flat of Usher in time for ARGUS SOFTWARE's launch of *Grange Hill - the Game*. Rolling up to their offices I was greeted by Carlos in headmaster's gear. "You're late", he bellowed. "See me after class". It only took a moment to remember that he'd once been a school teacher. Any ex-pupils out there, do write in and tell us his nickname, won't you!

On the subject of nicknames, I'd hardly had time to pick up my school badge – Vice Captain (it seemed most fitting!) – when somebody grabbed my sleeve. "Behind the bike sheds", she whispered into my armpit, being rather too short to reach my ear, "Five minutes".

Having stopped only to grab a can of beer, I headed for the rendezvous. There the mystery woman removed her gymslip disguise and revealed all. "It's Carlos", she told me. "You must stop calling him Cuddly. He likes it". She then suggested an alternative, but really, I refuse to brand him Kinky Carlos until I have facts, and/or photos to prove it!

Back to the throng and I managed to take a look at the game itself. It's based on one of the Grange Hill books and you take the role of Gonch in an after hours hunt for your confiscated Walkman. It's neatly animated but I wasn't able to study it in any depth, because anything to do with schools brings me out in an anxiety rash.

Luckily this allergy doesn't run as far as Fleur Taylor, who plays Imelda, and is, I'm happy to report, nothing like her on-screen character. In fact, she confided to me that she's even a Spectrum games-player. Her faves are adventures, *Atic Atac* and that ancient offering, *Valhalla*. She's obviously too busy acting to keep up with the state of the art!

I was about to discuss this further when the cane of Carlos descended and I was whipped off to the detention room. By the time I'd written out, 'I must not be late for Carlos's Press Conferences', a hundred times – and he wouldn't even let me use my word processor – it was time for a lunch appointment with the ever lovely **Amanda Barry** from ARIOLASOFT.



Amanda Barry – sure about the Spectrum's position, but in soft focus after yet another Tequila Sunrise

This was meant to be a general chat about the industry, but as there have been several dramatic developments at the company in the past few days, it seemed natural to focus on these as we munched a Mexican meal at Covent Garden's chic Cafe Pacifico.

The first topic was the new label, STARLIGHT, which is run by **Francis Lee**, one of the guys who made BEYOND a force to be reckoned with. We discussed it as we tried to work out how to pronounce the names on the menu, and started on the first of an endless round of Margarita's, which helped our Spanish no end . . . but screwed up our English.

STARLIGHT is starting in express fashion with *Deathscape*, a furious shoot up which will be arriving on the Spectrum some time in the next few months. And following it is *Dogfight*, a one or two player head-to-head aerial combat game with split screen views and vector graphics. From the early screen shots I saw, it looks good stuff.

The label ties in with the new moves at ARIOLASOFT. The company has decided to pull out of distribution and concentrate on publishing. Now that may not seem particularly relevant to you, but it should be. I've discussed the nature of the software industry before, and this sort of change could indicate what's happening in the business as a whole.

On the surface, nothing obvious will alter, except that ARIOLASOFT titles may be a little easier to obtain. That's because the company will be concentrating on what it does best, which is not simply creating games, but helping others to create them. So STARLIGHT, my old friends at TIGRESS and the rest will have the creative freedom to develop original concepts, in the knowledge that ARIOLASOFT will get them onto the streets.

This seems like a generally good thing to me. When a company spreads itself too wide, becomes too big, it can lose touch with its programmers. The only thing that's important to it is grinding out product. ARIOLASOFT's move could lead to more well-thought out games.

Amanda was positive too about the position of the Spectrum in the coming year too, even though the company will be releasing one of the best of the games consoles, the SEGA. She thinks that this will go to a whole new market of pure gamers, while the enthusiasts will stick with the machine we all love.

Just how much we love it was demonstrated by the late January Microfair. It coincided with the last day of Harrods sale, which usually resembles an American Football scrimmage, only less polite. But this time the Knightsbridge store was near empty. Surely all the Sloanes and Arabs weren't at the Horticultural Halls?

Okay, so I exaggerate, but there's still a lot of enthusiasm at these gatherings. It's interesting to see how the QL keeps 'em rolling in, too. Sir Clive's most ambitious micro may have been a financial flop, but it still has a strong following. There were plenty of bargains at the fair too, including some very recent tapes for a few quid. Could it be that not all manufacturers had such a buoyant Christmas?

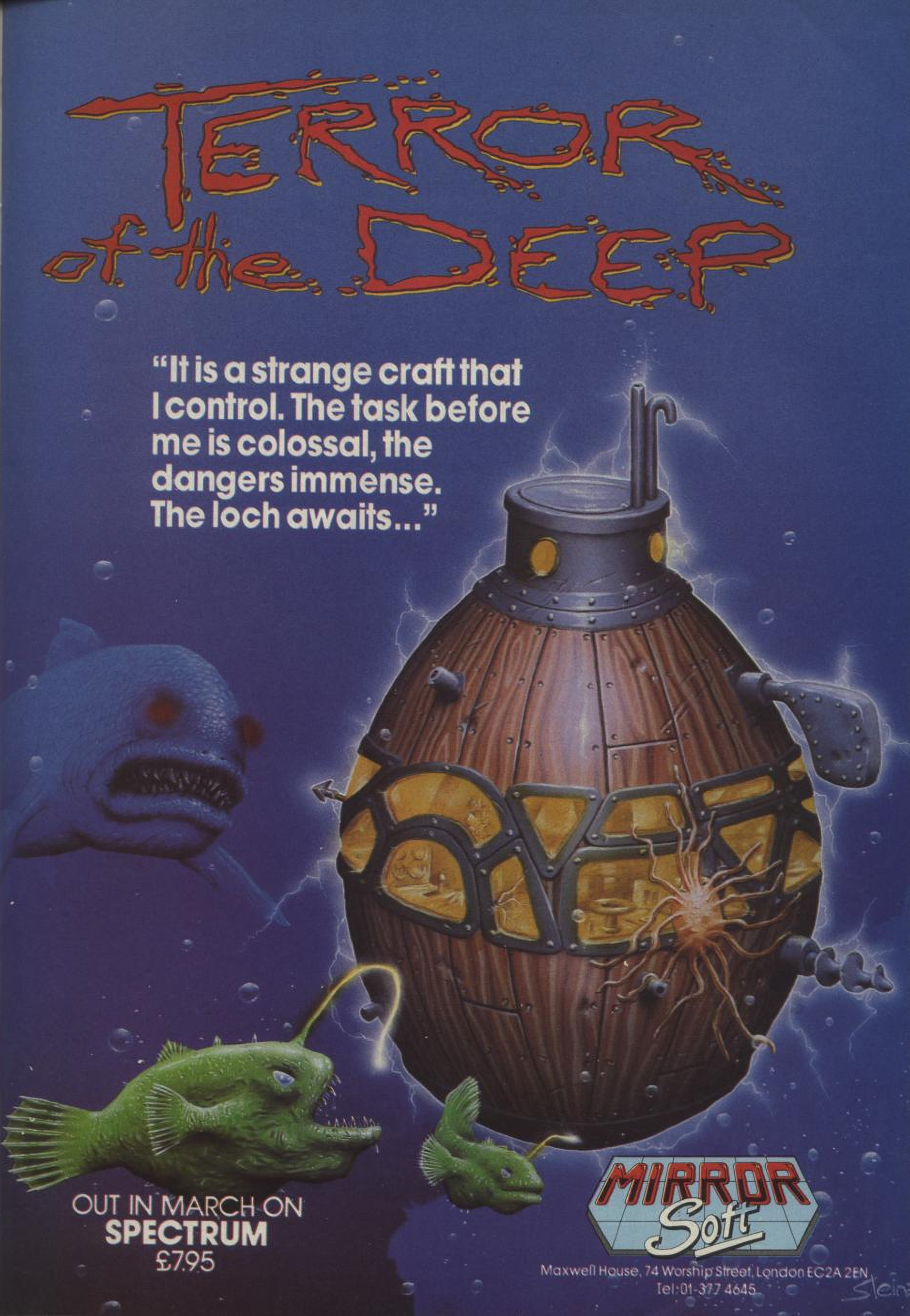
There was no CRASH stand this time though. I was forced to hang around Sinclair User's table, swopping insults with their delightful ad manager. A good thing I did, because it was then that I caught Paul Ponting, a CRASH competition winner, actually buying a copy of their comic. Worse, the warped wretch said that he'd never read my column.

I was just about to rip out his kidneys when he explained that he'd been forced to buy the offending rag by some so-called friends. Sure enough, this crowd of infidels was torturing him as we spoke. As he promised to tear himself away from CRASH's reviews for some Fear and Loathing, I stopped foaming at the mouth and sent him on his way. But be warned – you're never safe from the wrath of Newsfield.

Actually, I was hoping for a word with SU's Commie-dore loving gossip columnist, Kremlin. Seems somebody shouted into his ear trumpet that I'm getting married, and he decided to publish the fact. Well, yes it's true and already many of the most beautiful women in the world are weeping, joining nunneries, etc – but don't send any flowers yet, because the big day isn't till the summer.

Kremlin seems to reckon that getting hitched will bring an end to my wild life. Poor old thing! Perhaps he's drawing on his own experience. I can promise him that my fiancee has pledged to keep me in the weirdness to which you've all become accustomed! So Kremlin old buddy, if I do get any carpet slippers as a wedding present I promise to donate them to you. I'm too busy searching out the Fear, Loathing and Free Lunches!

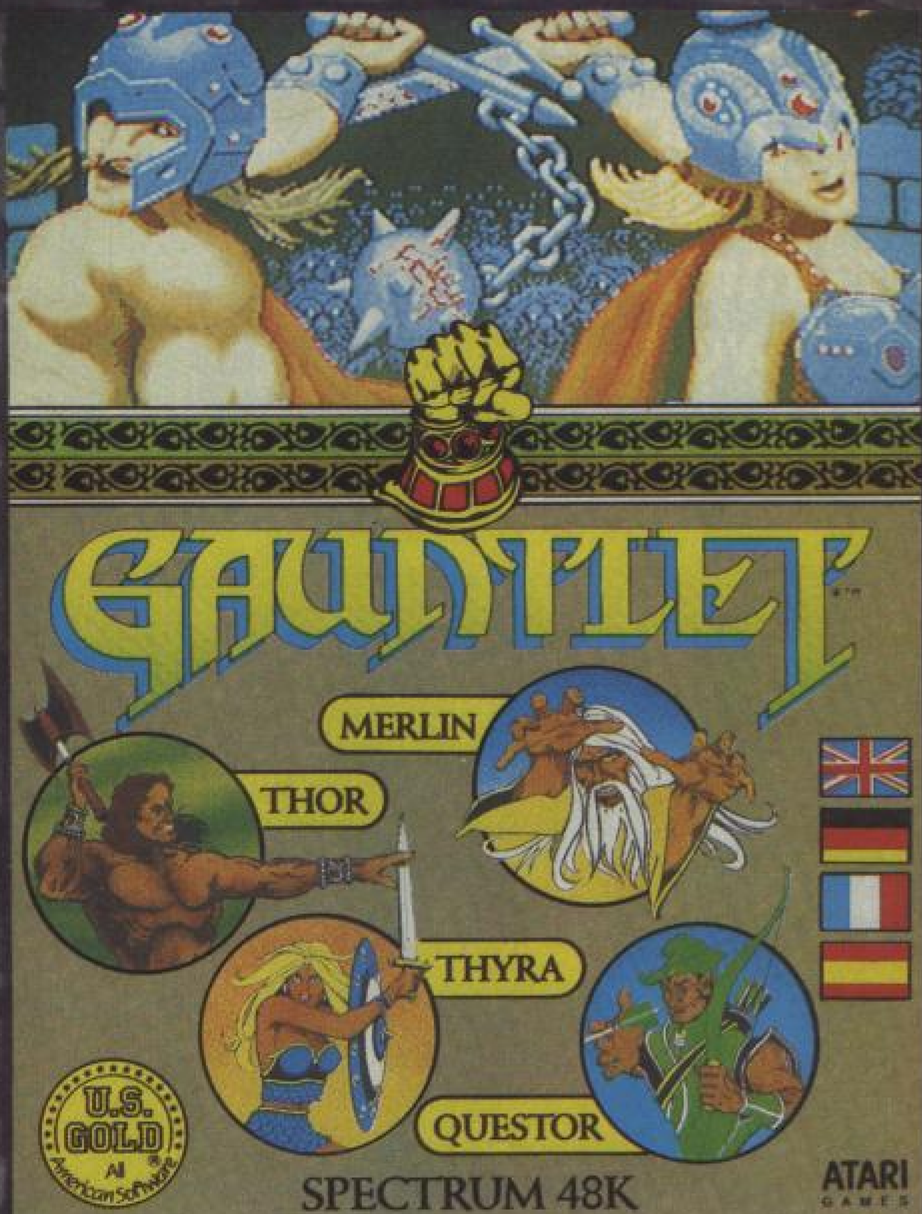
Olé – as we say down Mexico way.


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ATARI GAMES

BUTCH HARD GUY

Producer: Advance
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Future Concepts**

Platform games have been around ever since *Manic Miner* stormed the software charts four years ago. Since then however, they've had a patchy time of it. But *Cobra* showed that a good platform game can still chart, and ADVANCE have leapt in with this similar (though more light-hearted) offering.

Butch Hard Guy is just unbelievably butch, so macho that in comparison John Rambo and Zombie-Squad Cobra look like Dempsey and Makepeace. His mission? Rescue a few forgotten army war veterans who are held captive by the notorious villain Dr Tie Fu (no tea jokes, please).

Butch doesn't need namby-pamby toys like machine guns, grenades and rocket-launchers; and why should he, armed as he is with lethal fists and feet?

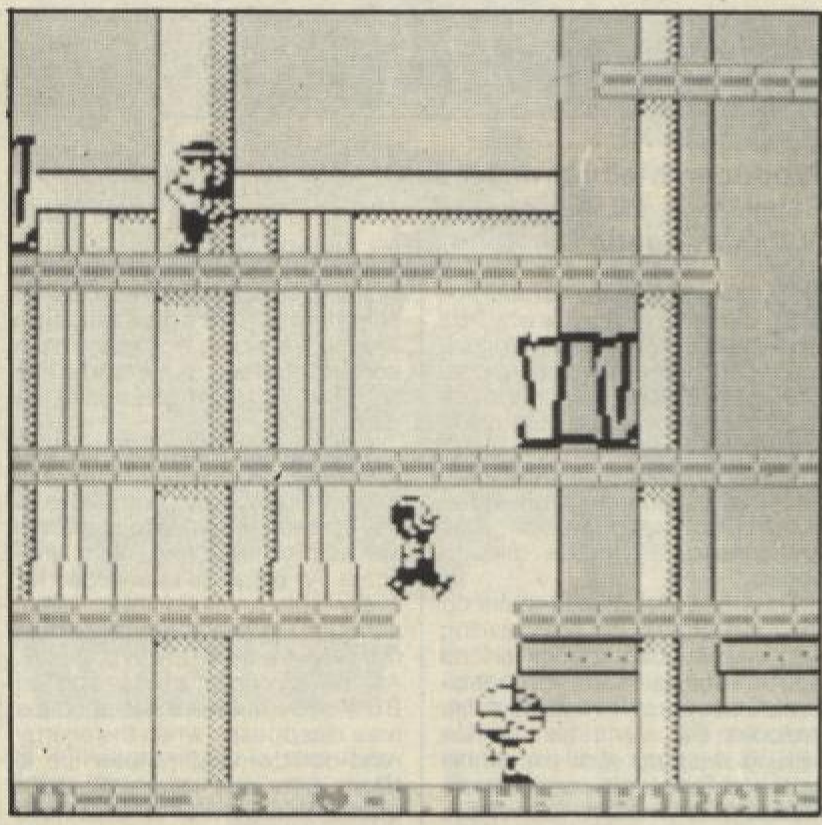
Somewhere on the 20 screens of platforms, are located the POW cages. It's up to Butch and his deadly arsenal of moves, to find them, shatter their bars with a swift kick, and then make for his helicopter with the War Vets in tow.

But there's a small problem – of course. Dr Tie Fu has a platoon of combat droids out protecting his interests. These can be stunned with a punch, or killed with a carefully timed kick, which results in their recoiling backwards and exploding. The flying shrapnel, however, is dangerous, and so is a robot's touch – it loses the Hard Guy one of his five lives.

Apart from running left or right, Butch can kick, punch and perform high or low somersaults. High somersaults are used to move up the screen, low ones are useful for leaping from ledge to ledge. Missing a ledge is bad news though, as a fall of more than the height of a somersault means the loss of another life.

Rescued POWs who get hit by a combat droid while making for the exit, go back behind bars... forcing Butch to free them all over again.

Points are scored for escaped prisoners, completed levels and killing droids. There are no extra lives to be won, so make every one count.



The last vet makes his way to freedom

CRITICISM

● **" I really like this. Obviously the programmer has some kind of warped mind – title bits, attract mode and the like are riddled with little stab comments about the industry and Rambo films. At worst these are boring, at best amusing. The gameplay is basic but very compelling – there's the odd moment when the graphics mess up so you can't see what's going, on but I still found** Butch Hard Guy **fun to play. I feel that this would be better suited to a budget price but all in all it isn't a bad game. "**

BEN

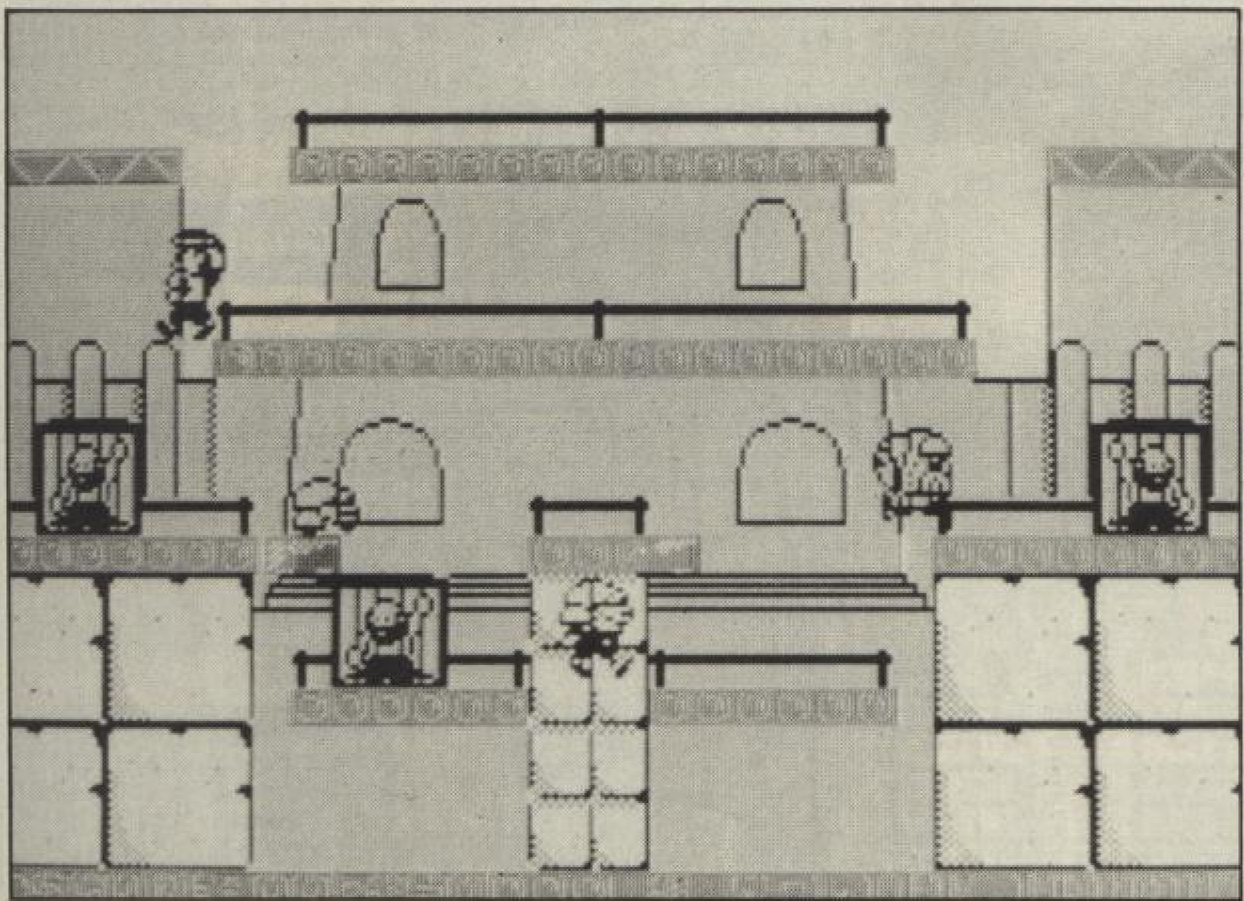
● *" I love the way that* Butch Hard Guy *is presented as a mickey-take of all the other bash 'em up games – the idea works and is well implemented. I found Butch Hard Guy to be one of the most addictive and playable games I've played so far this year. It's simple in structure, but effective. All the characters are smoothly and accurately animated – though they are a bit too detailed in some places, making them look like a mass of dots moving across the screen. Overall,* Butch Hard Guy *is a great little game. I look forward to his further adventures – or maybe a film tie-in... "*

PAUL

● " The first time I played *Butch Hard Guy*, I thought it was going to turn out a generally reasonable game, but it didn't take much to discover that it isn't all ADVANCE have cracked it up to be. The rescuing business is all very well for a short while, but after a lot of playing, it starts to get tedious. The graphics are fairly average, certainly nothing special, and the whole game, while initially playable, becomes boring. Not one I'd recommend. "

MIKE

Level Three, and Butch still has three captives to rescue



COMMENTS

Control keys: definable, left, right, up, punch
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor
Use of colour: poor
Graphics: small and badly detailed
Sound: nice drum solo which puts the rest to shame
Skill levels: one
Screens: 20
General rating: Despite mixed feelings about addictiveness, an above average and playable platformer.

Presentation	69%
Graphics	63%
Playability	74%
Addictive qualities	74%
Value for money	59%
Overall	65%

BAZOOKA BILL

Producer: Melbourne House
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Authors: **Arcade Machine Ltd**

Bazooka Bill is the hardest soldier alive – which is why he's been asked to rescue General MacArthur from the rebel forces. The exact position of MacArthur's prison is unknown, although inside intelligence reports have hinted at a group of islands in the South Pacific. Consequently, it is in the sub-tropical paradise of Atoll Archipelago that your mission begins.

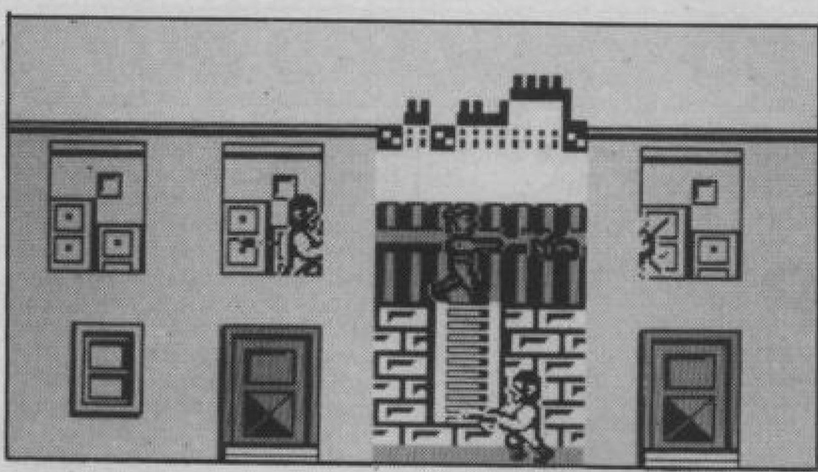
The three islands that make up the rebel stronghold are crawling with revolutionary troops armed with an impressive array of sophisticated weaponry. An individualist, Bazooka Bill starts his mission with no weapons at all except his fists and feet – his commanders expect him to make use of the resources he finds on the way. Bill can collect equipment, by walking over useful items as they are dropped by his fleeing victims. Weapons appear at the top of the screen as they are added to Bill's armoury, they can then be selected by using a cursor. Knives, Machine Guns, Flame Throwers and Bazookas become available, but each weapon has a limited useful life. Some weapons are only effective on specific targets – after all, it's no use trying to take out a tank with a Bowie Knife.

The screen is divided up into two levels connected by ladders, which either take Bill to another platform or onto a different screen altogether. The flip-screen format is used, and the ladders play an important part – it's possible to run around a building by flipping from screen to screen, but a ladder has to be used to progress into the game.

The revolutionary troops and their tanks, trucks, helicopters and jets enter play from both sides of the screen – in order to stay alive Bill has to deal death on a large scale. An extra life is awarded for every 100 revolutionaries killed, although Bill can't have more than five lives in reserve at any one time. As the rebels inflict damage on BB's body, markers in the status area disappear – when the energy read-out dwindles, a new life is taken from the quartermaster's stores. When Bill's five lives have been used up, a timer counts down from ten – pressing the C key before this timer reaches zero allows play to continue from the point reached, with a set of five new lives and the score set to zero.

Once an island has been explored and all the weapons and food collected, Bill can proceed to the next location by stealing an enemy jet from the airport, and he has to engage in aerial dogfights on the way to his destination.

Are you soldier enough to keep up Bill's reputation?



Exploring a building, with only his fists to protect him, Bill soldiers on

CRITICISM

● **" I'm sorry, but I really don't rate this new game from MELBOURNE HOUSE – it doesn't impress me in any way. It left me feeling that the programmers didn't care about what the end product eventually came out like. The gameplay is slow and becomes extremely tedious after only a short time. The graphics were designed on a sub-standard utility and are therefore pretty bad – the characters are messy and the backgrounds are dull. The sound is also well below average: there are no tunes and the effects are drab. I couldn't recommend this – it isn't worth the asking price. "**

BEN

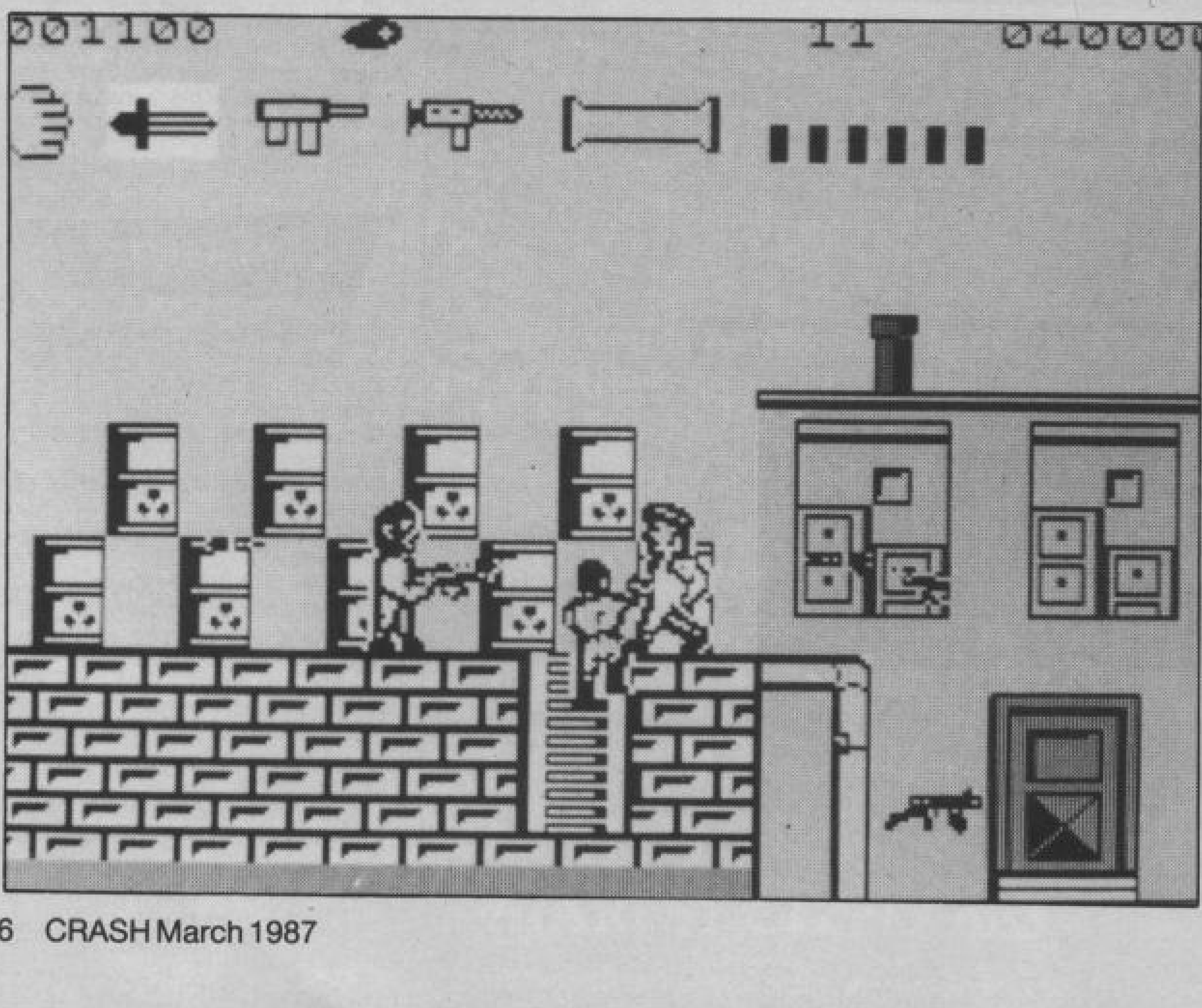
● *" MELBOURNE HOUSE are a bit late with this one – OCEAN and IMAGINE have already released better games, in the same vein as this, months ago! There is nothing original or addictive in the game. The sound is very weak, and not a tune to be heard. The character is very slow responding to key presses, which makes quick fire action impossible. Some of the later islands contain some good weapons and vehicles – but nothing to keep a player enthralled for too long.* Bazooka Bill *seems like too little too late. "*

PAUL

● " There is very little outstanding about *Bazooka Bill*: the graphics are colourful (although the characters aren't particularly well animated), and the game is nothing more than an average beat 'em up. The way in which the ladders move you about in different ways isn't very well portrayed in the two dimensional graphics. I don't reckon that anyone would play this for very long; as the gameplay involved is very simple, and so addictivity suffers. Not overly playable, and with a price tag that's far to high – *Bazooka Bill* isn't a game I'd recommend. "

MIKE

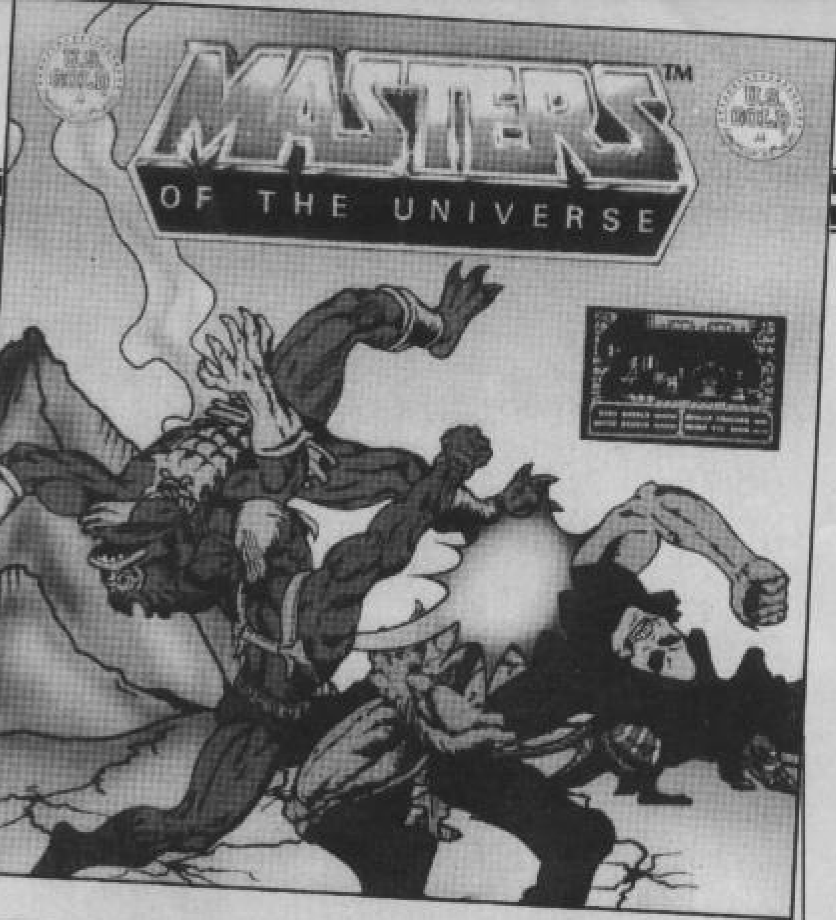
With a knife selected from the weapon menu, the ultimate tough guy takes on masked rebels by and oil dump



COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, Z down, I left, P right, SPACE selects weapons, H pause, C continue game, F abort
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Use of colour: simple yet effective
Graphics: colourful, by not very special
Sound: the odd spot effect
Skill levels: one
Screens: three flip-screen islands to explore
General rating: A poor development on a well-worn theme

Presentation	51%
Graphics	54%
Playability	41%
Addictive qualities	43%
Value for money	39%
Overall	42%



MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE

Producer: US Gold
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Author: **Adventure Soft**

First they went from TV stars to plastic toys, and now – predictably perhaps, they're a computer game. Masters Of The Universe has gone from strength to strength since arriving in this country from the States. US GOLD has licensed the idea from MATTEL and converted the hunky cartoon characters for the pixellated small screen.

All the favourites from the series are here, including the evil Skeletor, Sorceress, He-Man and of course Castle Grayskull. You, hunk that you are, play He-Man as he punches, slashes and kicks his way through yet another attempt to overthrow Skeletor.

Way beneath Snake Mountain the evil Skeletor has discovered the arcane Ilearth stone, and by using its supreme powers he has managed to take over Castle Grayskull. He-Man has vowed to destroy the Ilearth stone and put a stop to Skeletor's dastardly plans for domination. Unfortunately, Orko, trying to help out, cast an Imprison Spell at Skeletor, but because he was heavily protected by the Ilearth stone, the spell rebounded and now Orko is himself imprisoned inside Castle Grayskull. Now read on . . .

The task is to break into the castle, release Orko, destroy the Ilearth stone and reinstate the Sorceress back where she belongs inside Grayskull. There's a drawback. Skeletor has created an army of clones within the castle, who have been programmed to attack intruders, sapping their energy, and they must be destroyed or avoided.

Luckily, hunky He-Man, armed with his trusty Sword of Power, can despatch most of the clones with a quick poke at their nether regions. He's also a very agile fellow, able to run and leap over obstacles if necessary.

Apart from slaying as many clones as possible, the idea is to collect objects on the way, which might be useful during the mission. They also provide Orko with the right spell to release himself from the castle and to conjure the spell that you require: a spell to turn the sword into an Atom Crusher.

How much power remains in He-Man's sword, how many skulls he's cracked, and how much Body Shield he has left, are all shown in a status panel. Body Shield protects He-Man from most of the blows inflicted on his muscular body, and appears as a block around the on-screen character. It wears out though, and leaves him vulnerable to sudden death.

There's a time limit too, represented by moons. At the start He-Man has only three moons to finish off Skeletor. Will he manage everything in time?

CRITICISM

● " **The gameplay is non-existent, the graphics are bad, there's no sound and it's badly programmed. In fact the only thing that** Masters of the Universe **has going for it is its name. The controls are badly laid out, and there are two jump keys – one for each direction! Nice, pretty backgrounds and lots of colour, but when you move around things start to get sick (although there's no colour clash – the programmers have got round this by putting He-Man in a box, so whenever he goes near a landscape feature it gets rubbed out. Keep away, this is completely horrid.** "

BEN

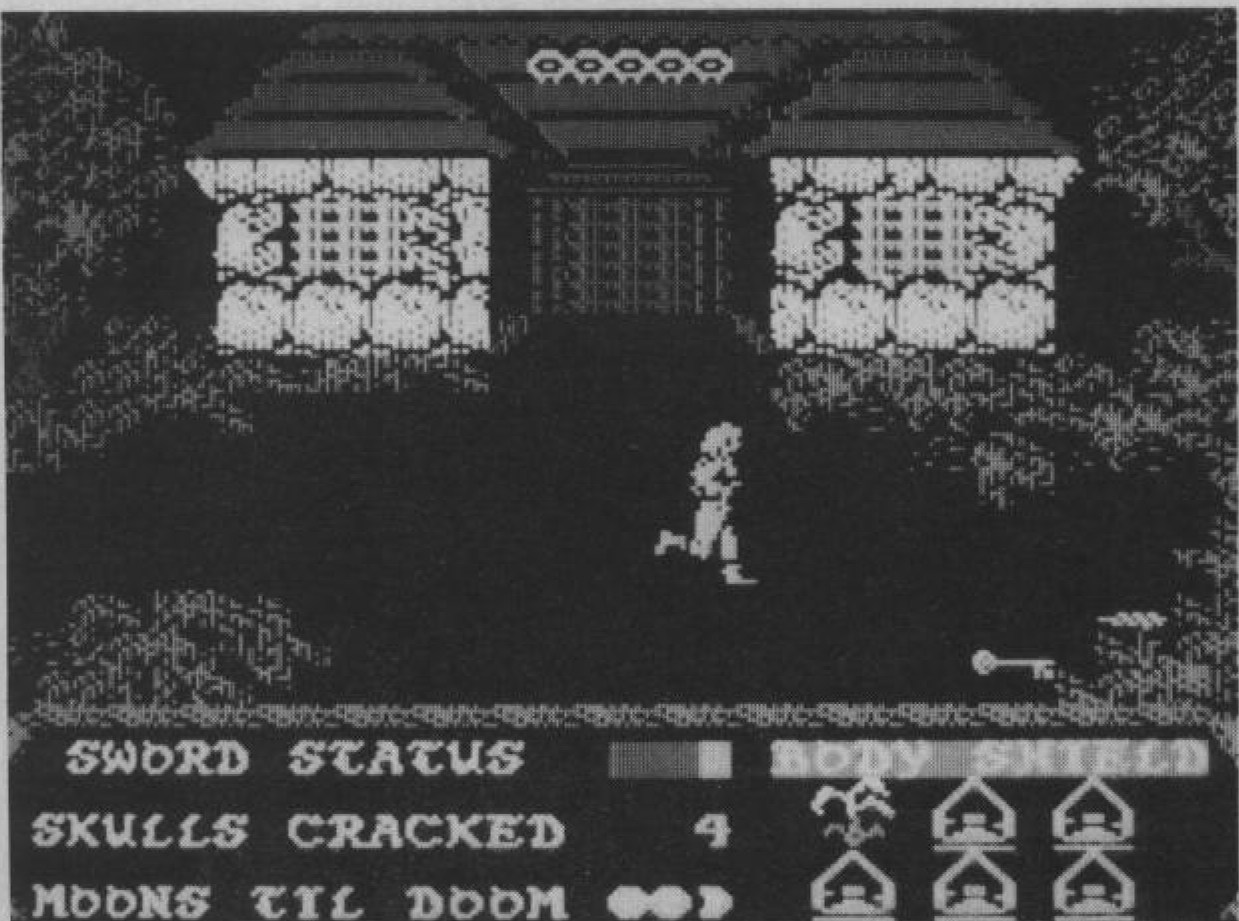
● " *What has* US GOLD *done this time? This must be one of the worst games to come out of their stable for ages – and it's one of the worst looking games around. There may be a lot of colour on screen, but it's badly constructed and too liberal – and why the hell they've got a big black 'halo' around the main character is beyond me. I found it unplayable, with the collision detection particularly apalling. I found it no fun to play, and there's nothing even slightly addictive to hang on to. I hate to say it, but even the TV series is better than this.* "

PAUL

● " What a pile of rubbish! The 'filmation' buisness is confusing, as filmation in computer terminology means something quite different to the definition used by the film production company who make *Masters of the Universe on TV*. The graphics aren't very good, and He-Man himself doesn't look particularly realistic. It's very boring to play, and not much good to look at. I wouldn't recommend it. "

MIKE

He-Man finds a key and an energy restoring twig . . . but he's only got two and a half moons left to complete his quest



COMMENTS

Control keys: 8 run left, 9 run right, 0 jump right, 2 up, W down, 1 jump left, SPACE fire, R restart
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Use of colour: colourful, but lots of clashes
Graphics: good when static, but moving spoils the effect . . .
Sound: none
Skill levels: one
Screens: scrolling play area
General rating: Poor programming skills, and non-existent gameplay makes for a missed opportunity.

Presentation	68%
Graphics	41%
Playability	27%
Addictiveness	27%
Value for money	26%
Overall	28%

LOCO

Producer: Alligata
Retail Price: **£2.99**
Author: **R Steveson and N Speight**

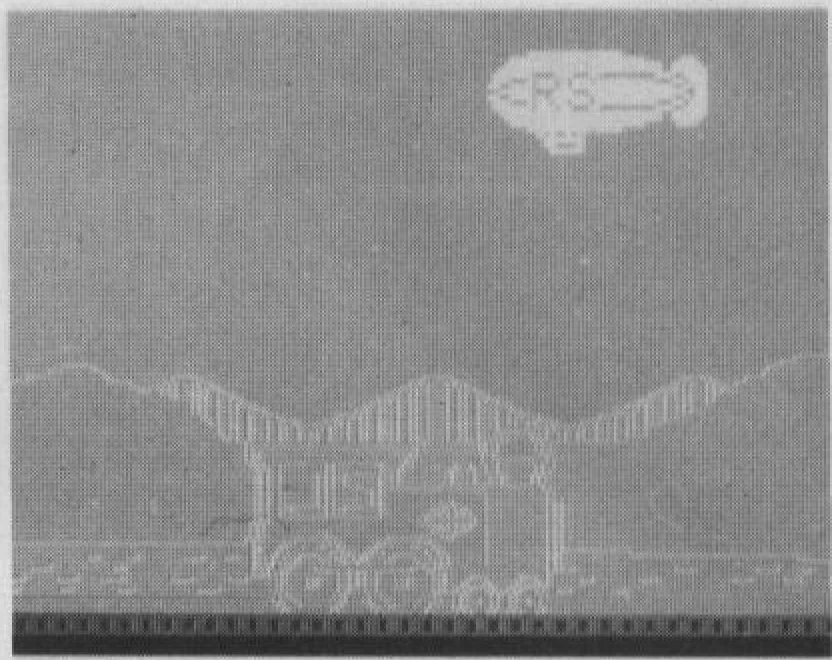
A steam-train journey is rudely interrupted by the outbreak of war, and the locomotive is in deadly danger. Taking the controls, it's up to you to guide the engine along a five-track railway, avoiding hazards and trying to hang on to your three lives for as long as possible.

The main screen gives a side view of the train as it progresses, with the background scrolling from right to left at a constant rate. Enemy planes zoom in for a low-level pass, emptying their payload of bombs in your direction. Runaway carts rumble down the track towards the loco and explode on contact, while airships hover in the sky attempting to drop bombs onto the roof of the engine. Evasive action is out of the question – the screen scroll forces the pace.

Trouble was obviously anticipated by the railway company, as the locomotive is not defenceless. Puffs of smoke can be released from the smoke stack to destroy falling bombs or blind enemy pilots, while the explosive trucks can be destroyed by firing blasts of steam from the front of the engine. Points are awarded for dealing death to the enemy and for blowing up trucks. A long-range radar display occupies the bottom of the screen, and warns of dangers lurking further along the track.

The fuel available is monitored on a bar to the right of the screen: the engine loses steam and grinds to a halt when the coal runs out, becoming a defenceless target. Coal dumps are scattered around the network of sidings, and it's possible to change the points and move onto a branch line to pick up supplies when you come to a junction.





An airship hovers menacingly above your engine

CRITICISM

● **" A mindless shoot 'em up no less – goody!** Loco **is the sort of game that will get loaded up, played for hours, and then never played again. The gameplay is compelling at first but appeal dwindles into apathy after a relatively short time. The graphics are simplistic but effective – the screen scrolls in half characters so it jerks a bit and the use of colour is dubious. The sound is also on the minimal side: the odd effect is all that is on offer. For the price, you could do a lot worse than buy this! "**

BEN

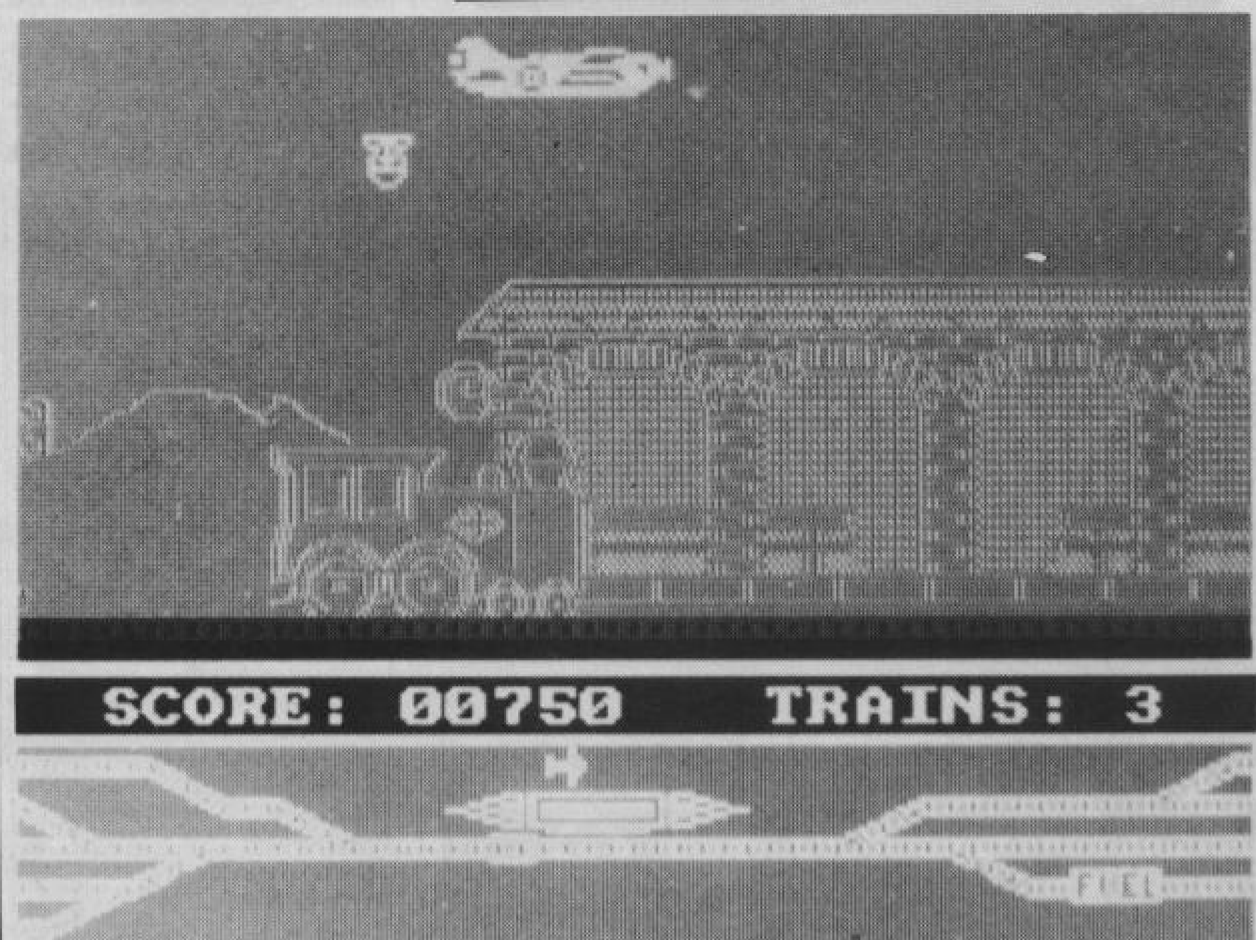
● *" This game is so playable, I can't believe it! Okay, so the game is a bit dated amongst the* Top Guns *and* Gauntlets *of today – but there's no denying the fact that* Loco *is great fun to play . . . for a while. The backgrounds are well drawn, but they don't change much and lack colour. The map at the bottom of the screen is a good idea, but can get out of synchronization with what is really happening above it. I would say that* Loco *is a brilliant game for the age range of 9-13, but anybody older than that would get bored fairly quickly. "*

PAUL

● " *Loco* is boring. The graphics are average, and the whole thing isn't much fun at all. The price, although only a few quid, is too much. *Loco* doesn't look like much or play like much. The title screen picture is neat, but then again, that hardly makes up for the fact that the game isn't very good. A very simple idea, but one that's far too simple to make an interesting game. Not recommended "

MIKE

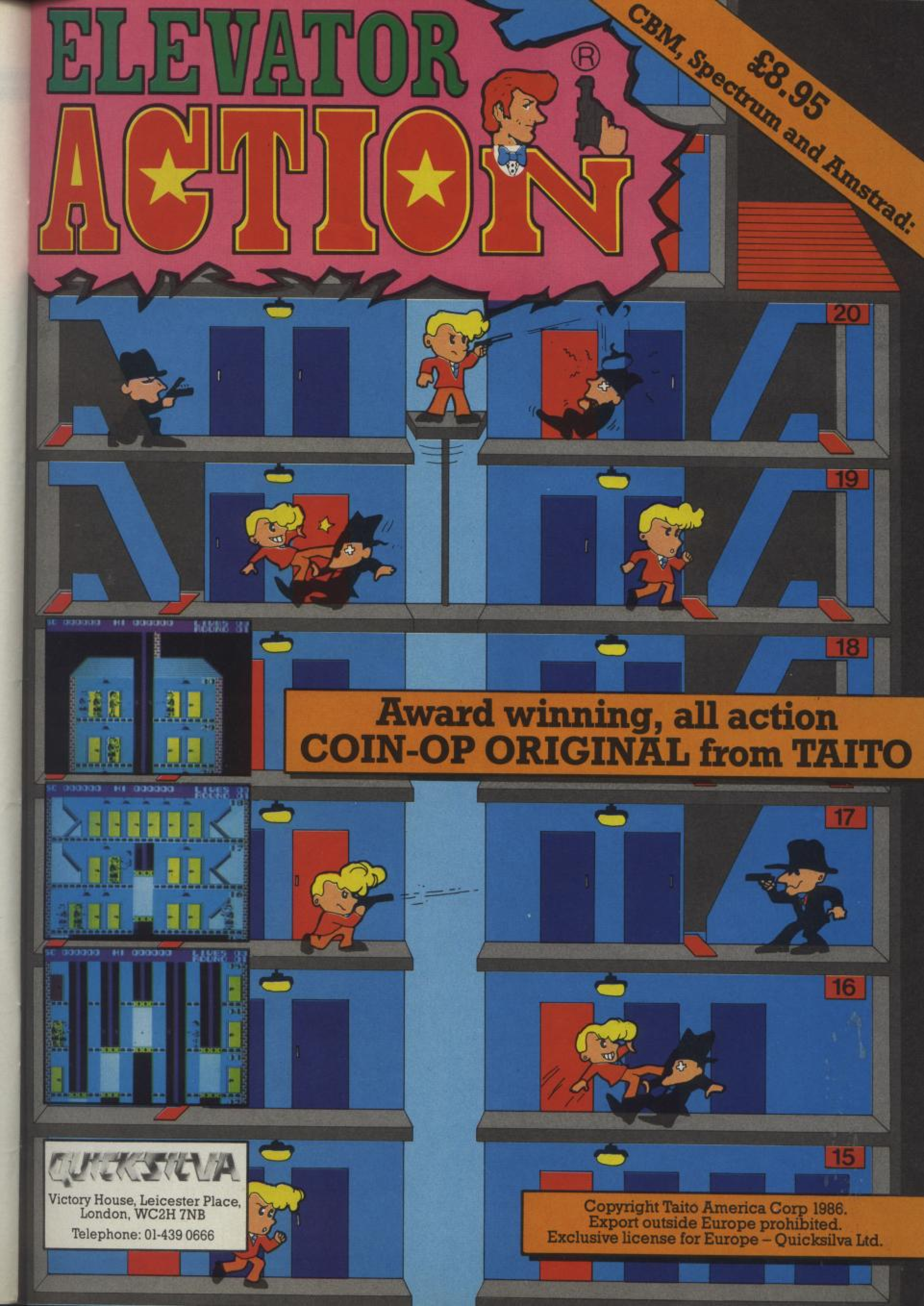
Wheeee! A chunky bomb falls from the belly of an enemy plane. Get ready with that smokestack, Casey . . .



COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up and A down at points; P release steam, SPACE release smoke
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: basic, with some clash
Graphics: fair detail, but simplistic
Sound: the occasional spot effect
Skill levels: one
Screens: five scrolling levels
General rating: A simplistic game that would only have long-term appeal to the younger player.

Presentation	54%
Graphics	48%
Playability	57%
Addictive qualities	40%
Value for money	51%
Overall	44%


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AGENT ORANGE

Producer: A 'n' F
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Author: **Icon Designs**

The single greatest drawback of space travel is its cost. But the costs are worth it of the profit is reliable, and space farming certainly meets that requirement.

You would like to try your hand at the new game of seeding uninhabited planets and harvesting the resulting crops. Trouble is, that an alien species have just had the same idea, and their plants ('weeds' to you) seem to do so much better. The only real ray of hope is Agent Orange – a potent weedkiller that reaches alien weeds the way ordinary dometic killers can't. It's out there in the wide galaxy – somewhere, if only you could find it . . .

Still, before that, there's farming work to be done. You are faced with battling across eight planets full of rival alien planters. Starting from home, a mothership heads for the first world, carrying seed-crop and all-purpose crop-planter/fighters (or daughterships). On arrival in orbit, an information screen shows the number of enemy craft on the planet, and their shield strengths. When the daughtership is launched, the screen displays the immobile mother ship and the virgin soil below. The view is from overhead with a left/right flip scrolling screen – the fighter moves in eight directions

Further read-outs indicate the fighter's shield strength, enemy shield strength, score, money and number of seeds and harvested crops in the fighter's hold.

Crops are planted by holding down FIRE and moving the craft over the planet's surface. Once sown, they multiply fruitfully, going through three stages of growth; red, blue and green. When green, they're ready for harvesting, a simple matter of moving the fighter back over them. Leaving the crops unharvested causes them to wither and die.

This scene of peaceful cultivation hides a violent fight for the right to plant. Alien fighter/harvesters are there too, and are determined to stake their claim. On the early levels of the game, just one shot disposes of them; but later, with bigger shields, they're far more aggressive. These ships can also plant crops, which you cannot harvest – but you can burn them off. If the joystick is released and the fire button is held down, the ship starts to fire rapid, short range shots, clearing alien weed to give your crops more room to breed.

Strategy plays a part. The fighter's hold carries only 600 harvested units, and when it's full, the fighter returns to the Mothership. Fighter shields are replenished at this stage. The Mothership can only carry 2000 units, so after three harvesting trips, the Mothership must return home to cash in the crops. But it can only leave the planet if all alien ships have been destroyed.

Back home you can trade ships. The current stock of ships and seeds is cashed in, and the sum added to money received for crops farmed. More expensive models with better shielding can be purchased with the profits.

Meanwhile, back at the space ranch, more aliens have taken up residence. You can return and start over, or try for another planet – who knows, you might discover that elusive Agent Orange.

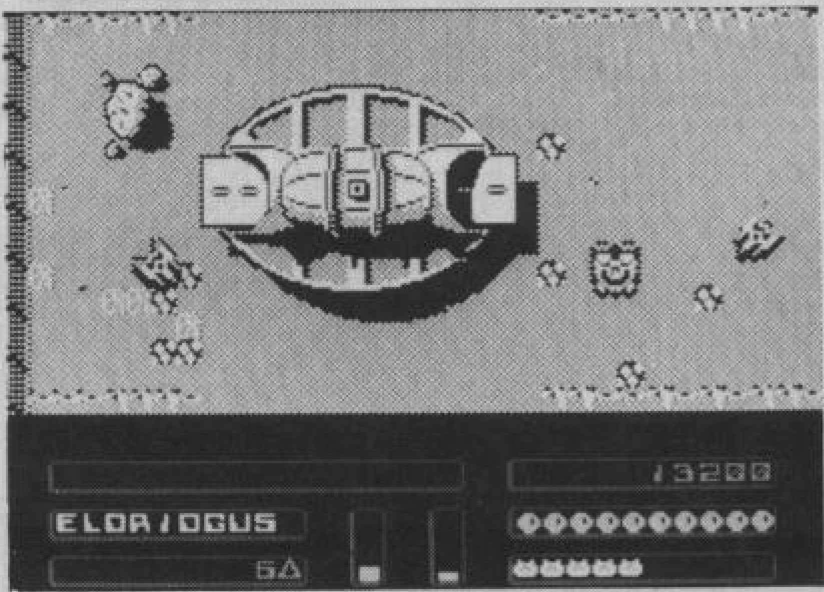
CRITICISM

● **" I really don't know what to make of this – it's a sort of dodgy shoot 'em up with a few frills and virtually no lasting appeal. The gameplay is much too difficult to get into and the instructions don't help that much – nice scenario though. The graphics are generally poor, the screen flicks abysmally and the characters, whilst being well detailed, flicker and jerk around the screen. The sound is also nothing to write home about. There are a few measly effects but no in-game tunes. There are some good shoot 'em ups around – this isn't one of them. "**
BEN

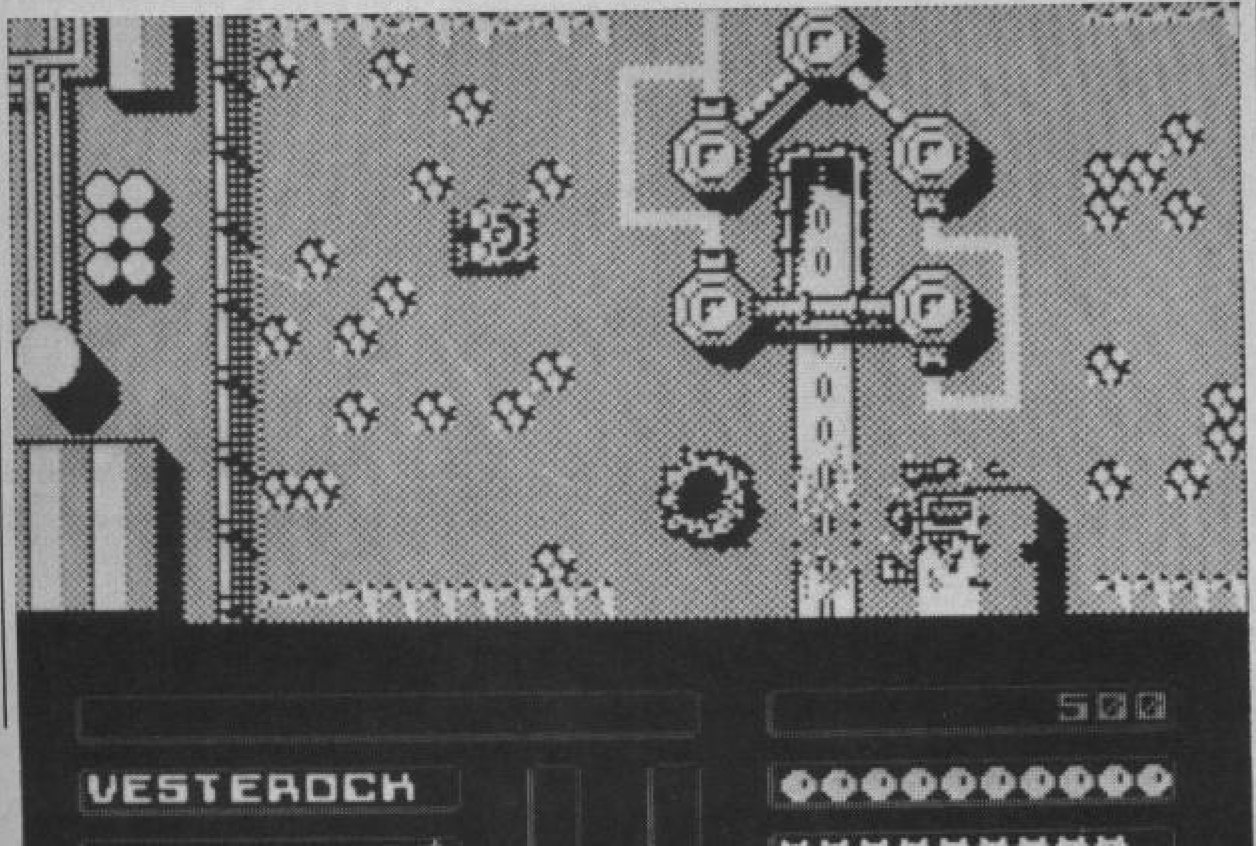
● *" I think it's a pretty sick joke to bring up Agent Orange as a subject for a game, but that's beside the point I suppose. You don't need to be put off by the name of the game, playing it will make you think seriously about it.* Agent Orange *is described as a combination of shoot 'em up and strategy. The arcade bit is certainly there, but the game contains little else. The idea of planting crops and harvesting them is quite neat but the thought hasn't been developed enough. I didn't really enjoy* Agent Orange *as it seemed very hollow in content. "*
PAUL

● " *Agent Orange* isn't all that much of a game. It's not flawed; the way in which it was put together seems to have done it justice, but the way in which the game itself actually works is fairly mindless. The business of fiddling about with crops is alright for the first few bouts, but after a while, it gets tedious. The graphics aren't stunning, and though *Agent Orange* isn't a bad game, I wouldn't recommend it. "
MIKE

Threatened by the approaching enemy, your craft emerges from the mothership



Between planting jobs, your fighter passes an abandoned processing plant



COMMENTS

Control keys: definable, left, right, up, down, fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour:
Graphics: detailed bas-relief, but jerky
Sound: title tune, average spot FX
Skill levels: one
Screens: eight scrolling landscapes
General rating: An original and intriguing idea, but lacking in the finer elements of gameplay.

Presentation	**72%**
Graphics	**63%**
Playability	**59%**
Addictive qualities	**55%**
Value for money	**53%**
Overall	**59%**

JUDGE DREDD

Producer: Melbourne House
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Author: **Beam Software**

Dredd has been a long time coming, unusual in one of such tempestuous certitude. It must be over two years ago that GAMES WORKSHOP confided they were developing a computer game based on the cult *2000 AD* comic-strip hero – but the Workshop stopped producing software. Dredd then moved surreptitiously over to MELBOURNE HOUSE some months later, and their game has been many moons in the making.

The time is the future; a post-punk, post-industrial world, where the minority managers run automated factories and write the laws, while the teeming masses celebrate their terminal boredom in crimes ranging from petty to meglomaniac. The law is unforgiving – in Mega-City 1 the equivalent of being hung for stealing a loaf is to be shot for jay-walking, presumably because you shouldn't get in the way of a busy, car-bound manager.

Meanest of all the Judges is Dredd, a man-myth who wears his beliefs in a holster.

MELBOURNE HOUSE now offers you the chance of a few hours inside Dredd's death-black armour, astride his Lawmaster motorcycle, and with his faithful Lawgiver strapped to your side, in the eternal hunting down of perpetrators (or 'perps') who threaten Mega-City 1 with anarchy and destruction. Moving through city streets on foot is considered an A 7 risk, so Dredd, following basic procedures as laid down in the Justice Department Regulations, prowls his sector on his Lawmaster. From this mobile position, monitoring crimes as they're reported on the crime display screen is simplicity itself. By moving an icon (representing himself) over a reported incident on the display and pressing fire, Dredd is whisked to the incident – and dismounts.

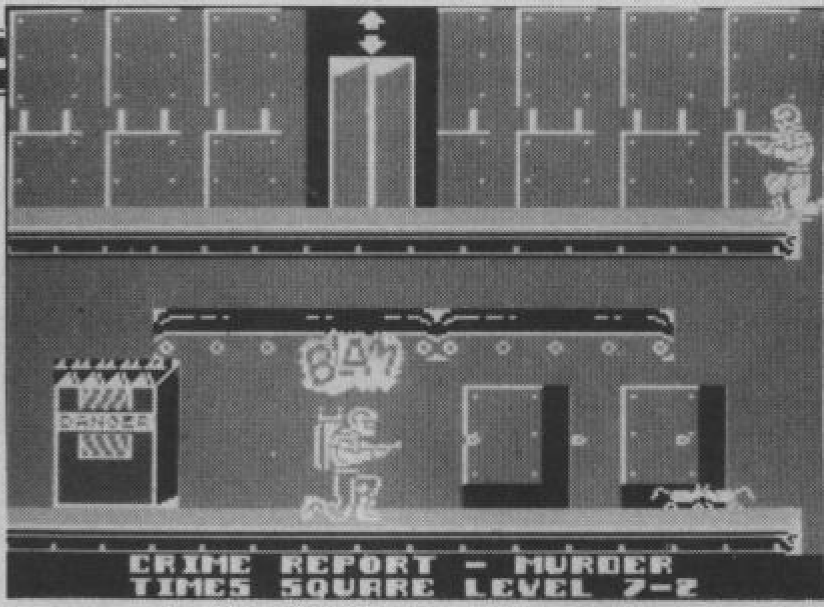
The game now switches to a side-on-view platform game. A status panel below the playing area offers three selectable readouts. The first shows remaining levels of stamina and ammunition, and also states the Judge's response; three may be selected. **Halt** is a shouted warning, **Warn** fires a shot across the perp's bows, while **Kill** speaks violently for itself.

Dredd moves from screen to screen by running along platforms and jumping up or down. Alternatively, lifts and doorways may be used to reach the last known position of the perp and bring him to book. In responding to **Halt** or **Warn**, the perp sticks his hands in the air and 'comes quietly'. But should Johnny chance his arm, it's out with Lawgiver – and BADAAM!

When the crime is first selected on the crime display, its 'normal' level of threat is set for Dredd, but some perps are more desperate (or foolish) than others and the Lawgiver is designed accordingly.

The ammo comes in six grades: Normal, Armour-Piercing, Heat-Seeking Bullets, Ricochet, Incendiary and High Explosive. Armour-Piercing Bullets can be fired right through platforms. Heat-Seeking Bullets track down the perp. Ricochet Bullets can be bounced off walls and floors, while High Explosive and Incendiary Bullets are extremely prejudicial to a perp's well-being.

As Dredd deals with one crime, others are continually being perpetrated, so having dealt successfully with one, it's back to the crime display to check on progress throughout the sector. Should there ever be more than eight crimes on screen at once, the game is over and the criminals have overrun the city.



Even a heavily-armed murder suspect can't escape from the long arm of Judge Dredd

CRITICISM

● **" If you are a regular CRASH reader you may have noticed that we have a great liking for 2000 AD and its characters. I am EXTREMELY DISAPPOINTED with this awful effort.** Judge Dredd **had potential to be one of the strongest characters ever to appear in a computer game; unfortunately the situation here cramps his style. The game has been badly planned and abysmally programmed, it's hard to play and eventually repellant. I'm afraid that this does no justice to the original cult cartoon strip whatsoever – stay well clear of it. "**

BEN

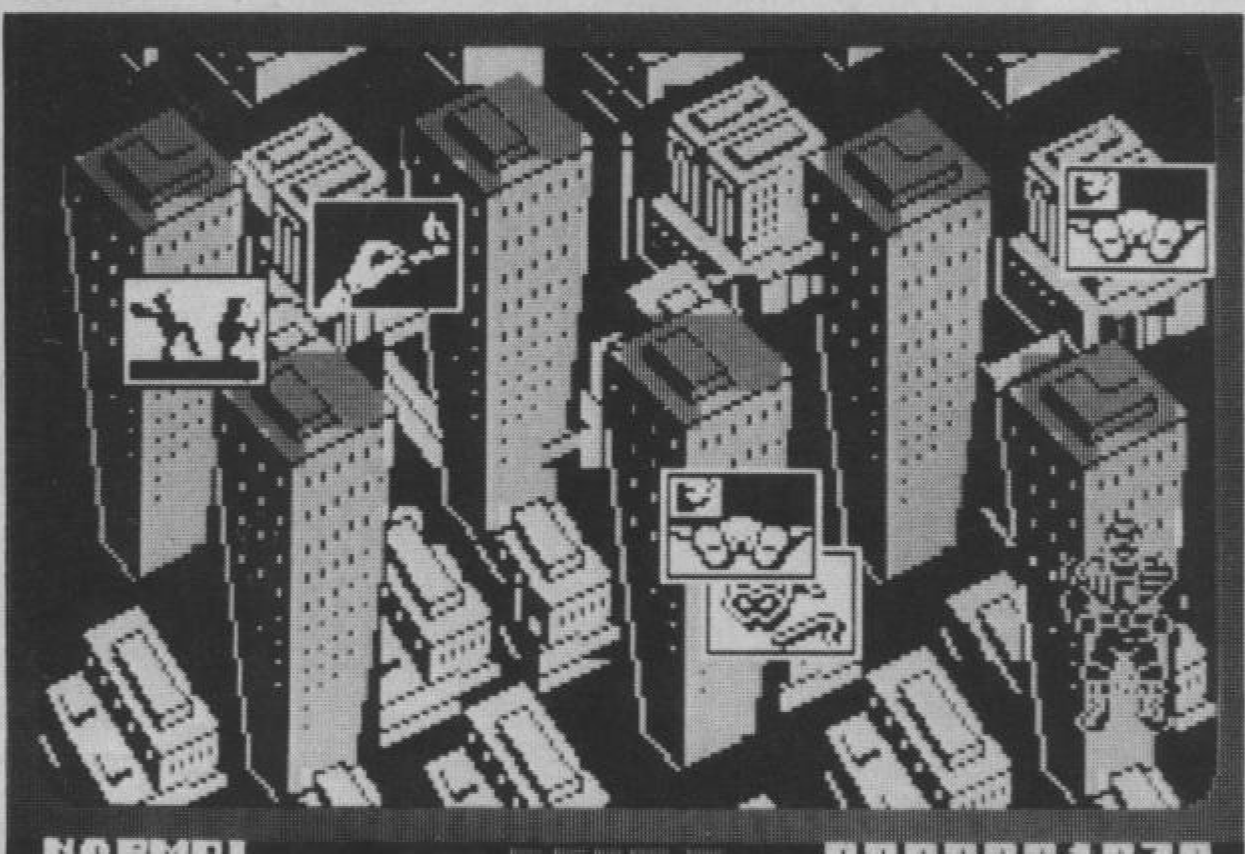
● *" Judge Dredd seems to be in the same vein as V, both look pretty but are boring to play. Some of the characters are well drawn, but none are solid enough to resemble humans. The game has no music, the sound effects are poor variations on simple white noise. The key-define section is badly thought out – defining separate keys for moving diagonally is outdated. I can't see* Judge Dredd *appealing to* **2000 AD** *readers because it isn't half as much fun as the comic strip. "*

PAUL

● " *Judge Dredd* isn't all that bad – though I didn't like it much at first playing. Later on I started to get into it, and it became more playable. Unfortunately, by that time, it wasn't long before it became boring. The graphics aren't up to much, but they serve their purpose. Dealing with the different crimes in different ways is initially quite enjoyable, but the game's staying power is limited. Sorry MELBOURNE HOUSE, but I reckon that I would find 20 copies of **2000 AD** much better value for money. "

MIKE

The soulless Citi-Blocks of Mega-City 1 form a fitting back drop for the Crime display screen



COMMENTS

Control keys: T–P choose bullet type; J–L choose response level; ENTER select report; movement keys definable
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: garish, with attribute problems
Graphics: reasonable backdrops, but awesome Dredd is reduced to an ill-defined cypher
Sound: no music, poor spot FX
Skill levels: one
Screens: over 50
General rating: A valuable licence shot to pieces in Mega City 1 – an awful pity.

Presentation	**69%**
Graphics	**50%**
Playability	**38%**
Addictive qualities	**36%**
Value for money	**38%**
Overall	**42%**

JAIL BREAK

Producer:Konami
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Andrew Glaister and S Ruecroft**

There's been a jail break. The warden is tied to a stake in his own prison yard, and the inmates have taken over the town and are holding the citizens hostage. It almost makes you wish that you'd never joined the police force. Orders come down from above – free the warden at any cost. This gives you carte blanche to shoot just about everything – the kind of mission you really enjoy.

The prisoners are armed with guns and are lobbing tear gas grenades at anything official looking – like yourself.

Combatting the revolting prisoners isn't going to be easy, all you have, is a fast-repeating pistol – hardly a match for the horde of jail breakers. But releasing hostages (simply done by moving over them), adds new weapons, either a bazooka or a tear gas grenade launcher. They're shown on screen and can be swapped over by pressing SPACE. Additional weapons are lost each time a hostage is accidently shot, so it's back to the pistol again.

The screen scrolls from right to left, the policeman moving and firing in four directions. Most of the convicts come from the right hand side of the screen, although occasionally one may try and sneak up from behind.

The hostages are to be found strolling around town, blissfully unaware of the mayhem and carnage around them. But some sit in the road or in windows of houses, pathetically waving their hands, waiting to be rescued.

Stage one is the town where the villains are on foot. Stage two moves to the city park where the escapees have hijacked trash vans and are intent on driving the heroic policeman into the dust. The final section takes place in the prison itself, where the warden awaits rescue – prisoners are particularly thick on the ground here.

The pistol is favourite for disposing of running convicts, and the bazooka comes into its own when clearing obstacles and prisoners who hide under manhole covers. Finally the tear gas launcher is handy for flushing out well dug–in convicts.

If additional weapons are lost through indiscriminate shooting, it may be necessary to wait for a hostage to come along for rescue before continuing the carnage.

CRITICISM

● **" At last, the long-awaited first release under KONAMI's own label has arrived. We eagerly loaded it up, and then . . . what a disappointment! Over the last hour I've squeezed-out every last ounce of playability that is to be had from** Jail Break. **Now I'd be extremely happy if I never had to see it again. The game is fairly well presented, and the sound is quite bearable (although effects are used minimally). But the game . . . I'm sorry KONAMI but I won't be awaiting your next release with quite as much enthusiasm. "**

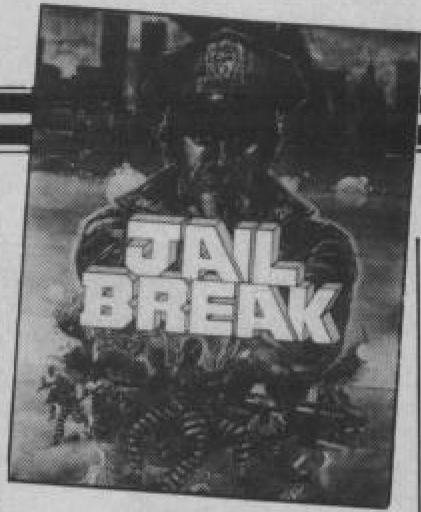
BEN

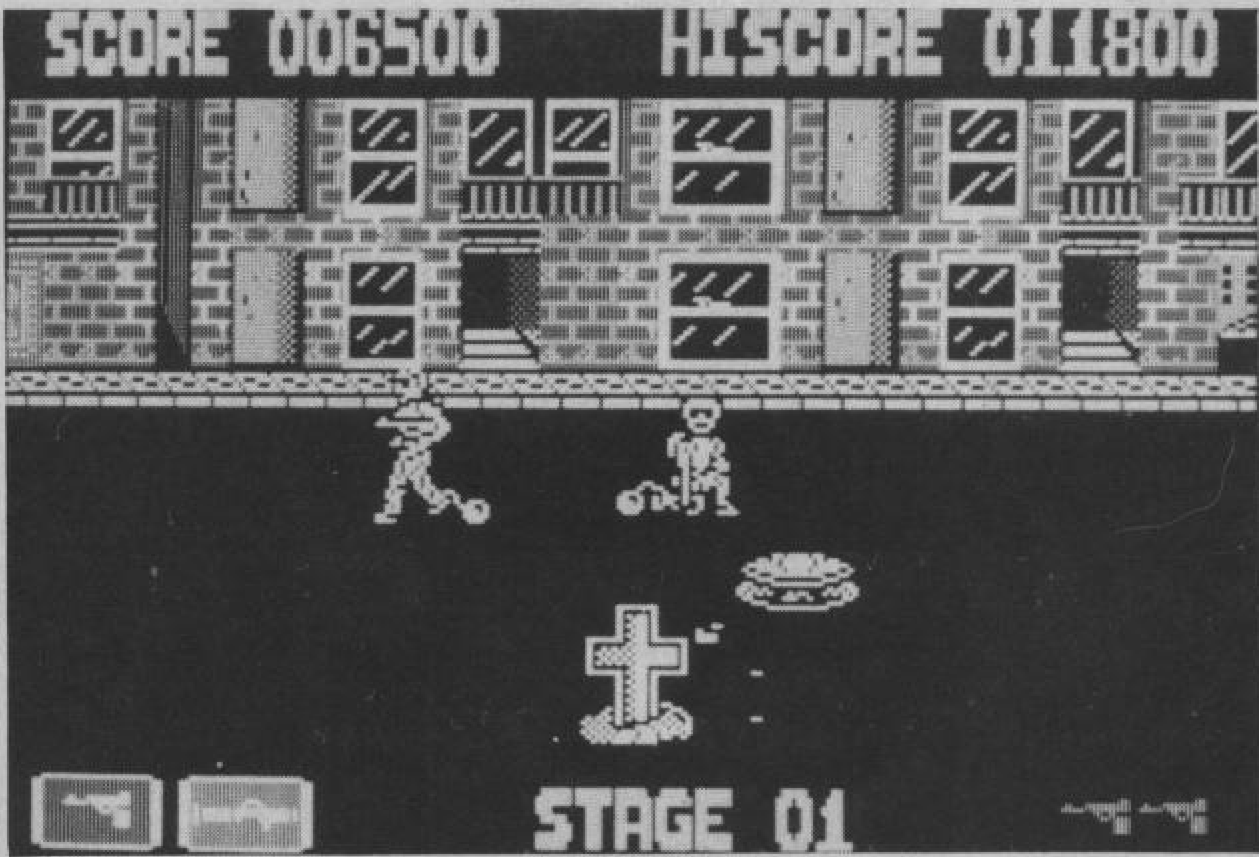
● " Jail Break *is an extremely hard game. It takes quite a while to get used to the collision system – the bullets seem to be able to go through your legs, but if they hit your hat you've had it. The scrolling is atrocious. The background moves jerkily and slowly, although the graphics are nice and detailed. The characters don't move about very smoothly and often get lost behind each other when two appear at once.* Jail Break *is quite good fun to play, and fairly addictive. However, it doesn't excel in any areas, and is not one of the best games with which to launch a new label. "*

PAUL

● " Wow, what a totally trashable box. Wow, what incredibly poor graphics. Wow, what a generally rubbish game this is. At least KONAMI have got the courage to actually take the blame for it; probably because no-one else would! The scenario is hardly original, and the game itself lacks any amount of playability, addictivity, and most of the other things that would usually convince someone that a game is worth buying. Boring, not very playable, and poor value for money. KONAMI have already started to lose their reputation. "

MIKE





A policeman's lot is not a happy one, but at least the convicts had the decency to erect a headstone



Save us from the ball and chain . . . our heroic cop must dispose of two convicts before rescuing the housewife

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q left, W right, I up, J down, O fire, SPACE select weapons
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: minimal
Graphics: dubious sprite collision and poor scrolling routines spoil otherwise pleasant graphics
Sound: sparse spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: scrolling play area
General rating: An alarming disappointment, coming as it does from the arcade masters.

Presentation	60%
Graphics	54%
Playability	41%
Addictive qualities	48%
Value for money	51%
Overall	47%

TEMPEST

Producer:Electric Dreams
Retail Price: **£7.99**
Author: **David Pridmore**

So, this isn't based on the famous play by Will Shakespeare, but it is just as frenetic as that drama. For the sake of a scenario, Hyperspatial Wireways are a series of wire tubes spanning the universe which guide travellers safely to their destinations. A problem has arisen though, in the form of weird aliens infesting the Wireways and making them unsafe for journeying. Down to you Zapper.

Your task is to clear the Wireways as best you can. Each screen is of a different-shaped wireway. The zapper you control is at one end, and hordes of aliens gradually make their way up from the other end towards you. Wireways consist of several lanes across which the zapper moves blasting away along them.

The aliens are multifarious. Flippers are lines which flip from lane to lane as they make their way slowly up the Wireway. Shoot when they briefly pause before flipping again. Flippers can destroy the zapper if they flip on to it.

Fuseballs are cross-shaped and stick to one lane. Should they reach the end of the Wireway, they block the zapper from moving across that lane.

Square-shaped tankers slowly rotate as they make their way up the lanes. When hit, they either split into two flippers, or a spiralling fuseball. If the tankers get to the end of a Wireway, they split as if they had been hit or sometimes just go phut and disappear. The resulting fuseballs hurtle around the Wireways, gradually moving towards the zapper.

Early game levels only have flippers and fuseballs, tankers turn up later. But after level 12, spikes and pulsars arrive. Spikes look like single lines and grow straight up the lanes, slowly extending themselves. Left alone, they eventually wither and return down the grid. These are only lethal if the zapper passes over them when fully extended. When shot, they remain at their present length until the screen is finished, and then extend to their full length. They cannot be shot at this stage.

Pulsars look like flippers, but don't flip, they just travel straight up a lane. If the pulsar reaches the end of the lane, it short-circuits the grid and destroys that lane.

Ordinary zapping is hard work, but once per level the super-zapper may be used. It simply clears the entire Wireway of everything. If it's used before all the aliens have come onto the Wireway, the remaining aliens travel faster.

Points are scored for all aliens killed (super zapping doesn't count), and there's a bonus for finishing each level. You get three zappers to start with, another every 10,000 points, and you can choose to start on any screen.

CRITICISM

● **" Yeah** Tempest **is finally here. The only problem is that it is on the Spectrum, therefore all the computer's limitations come into play. The action is spoiled, surprisingly enough not by the speed, but by the graphics, which simply aren't clear enough for you to be able to play the game properly. The sound is fairly good, there are no tunes but the zappy effects during play more than make up for it. I didn't really expect this to be much good, arcade conversions seldom are, so I'm not too disappointed with it. But the dire front end and attract mode don't appeal much. "**

BEN

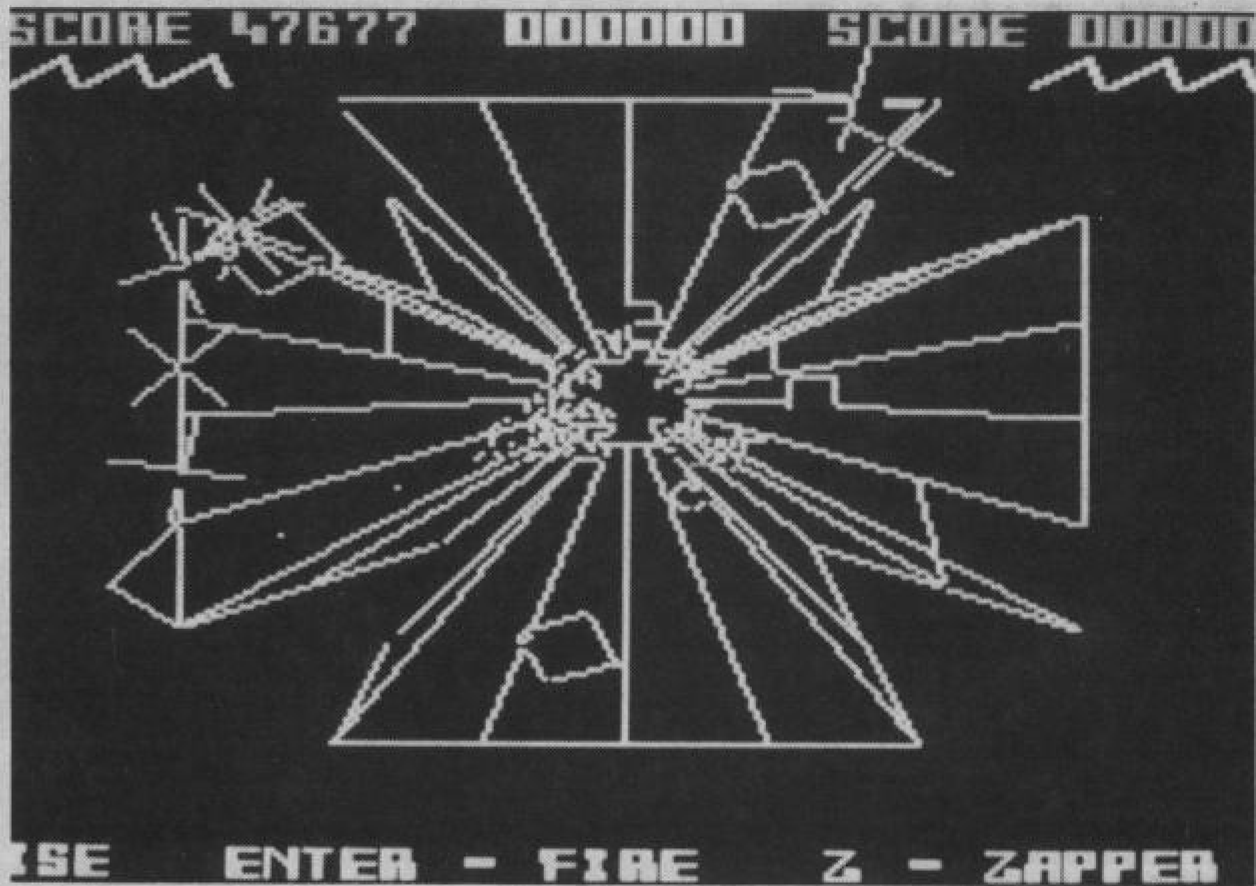
● *" I remember how good* Tempest, *the arcade game was. Unfortunately the addictiveness and playability seem to have been lost in the mists of time. The graphical transformation seems accurate and the depth of play area has not been lost. However, there's a limit to the complexity that can be portrayed on the Spectrum screen; I began to feel I wasn't really looking forward to the next level, or even the next game, as the basic formats of each had little variation.* Tempest *contains nothing to keep the player interested. "*

PAUL

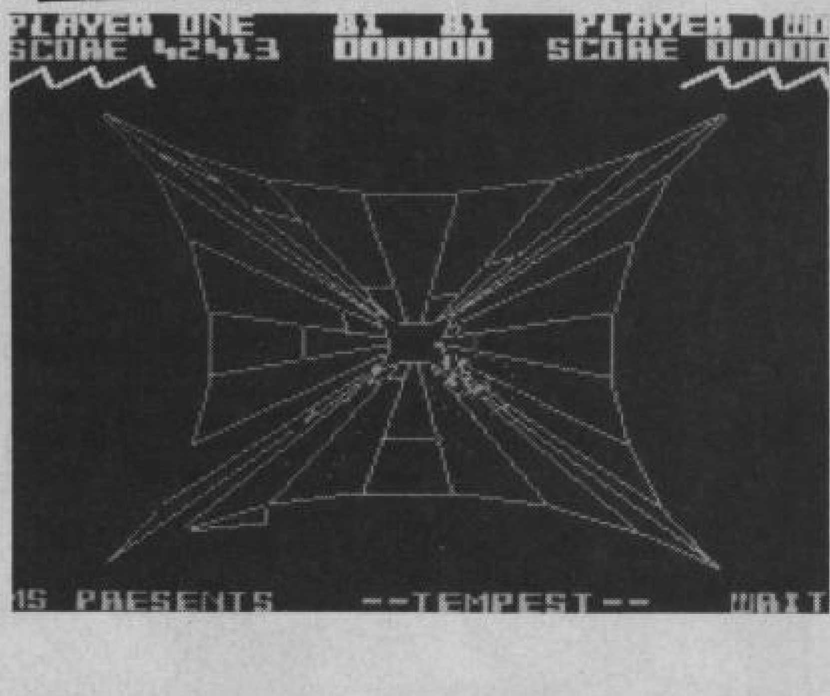
● " *Tempest* has a great deal of fun going for it. There's no denying the fact that it's nothing but totally mindless blasting. Then again, if you're prepared to wear your fire button into non-existence, then this is the game to get. Absolutely no strategy, forward planning, or intelligence is required; if like me, you enjoy an incredibly destructive bout of meanie bashing, then *Tempest* is worth looking at. Price wise, though, think carefully before buying; it is a bit steep. "

MIKE

Cameron bravely blasts away in demo mode



The start of level 81 (surely some mistake!!) or has demo mode struck again

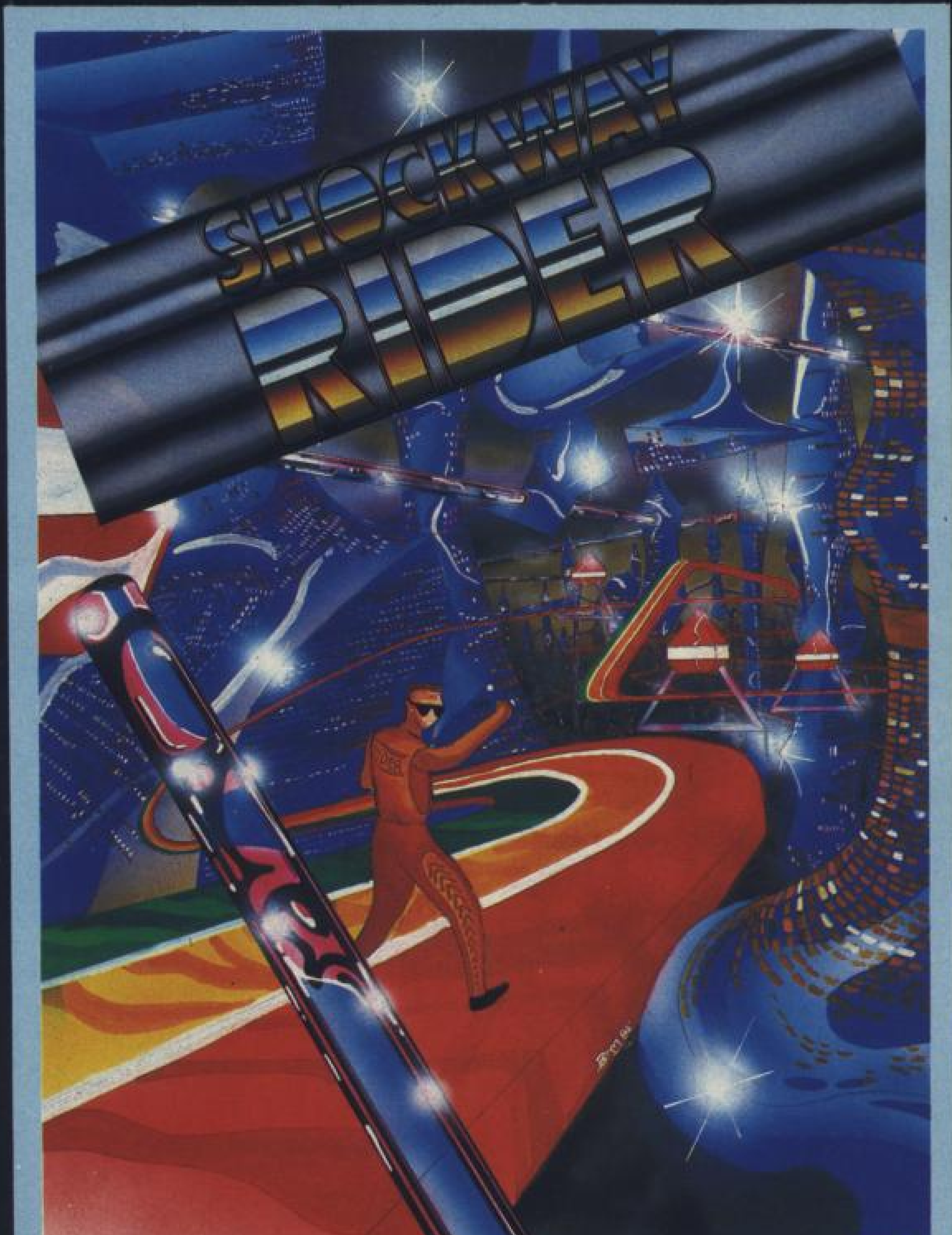


COMMENTS

Control keys: Q anti–clockwise, E clockwise, ENTER fire, Z zapper
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Use of colour: monochrome play area
Graphics: understandably slow and rather cluttered
Sound: good explosion effects
Skill levels: 99
Screens: 99
General rating: A good try at a game not really suited to the Spectrum.

Presentation	57%
Graphics	61%
Playability	65%
Addictive Qualities	59%
Value for money	55%
Overall	62%

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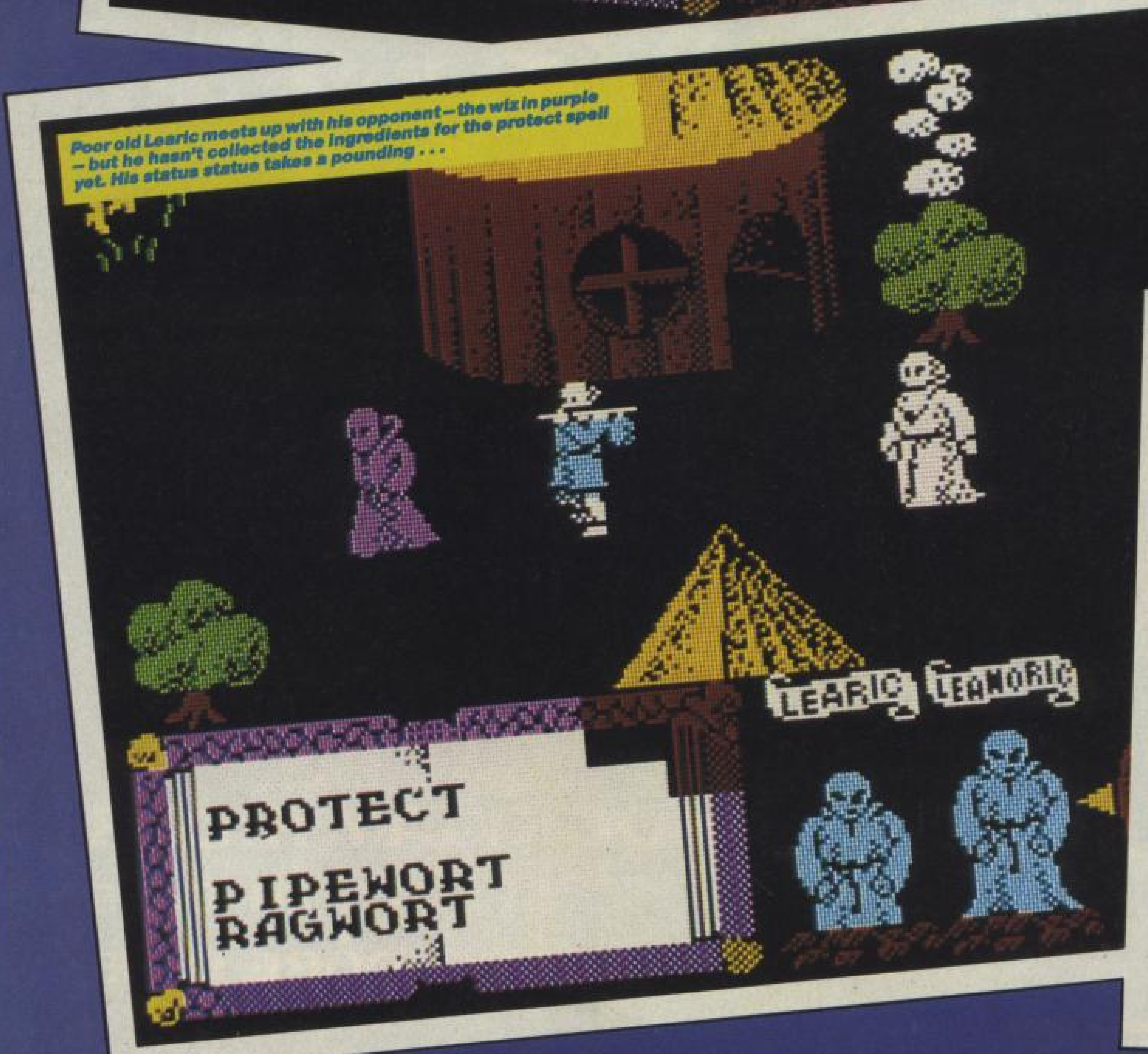
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Learic starts out at home base, next to his trusty cauldron. Let the FEUDing begin!



Poor old Learic meets up with his opponent – the wiz in purple – but he hasn't collected the ingredients for the protect spell yet. His status statue takes a pounding . . .



A verdant pathway populat… right spell, you can turn th…

F·E·U·D



BULLDOG is a new label just set up by MASTERTRONIC, and like its parent company, it will specialise in budget games – all its releases are to be priced at £1.99. *Feud*, is the launch game and the player is taken into the world of magic, engaging another wizard in one-to-one combat.

The story begins in a far away land. Two wizard brothers, Learic and Leanoric, start an argument – the quarrel escalates, and the kinsmen begin a feud in which they fight with spells. The player takes control of Learic and the computer assumes the role of his brother. Both brothers are well versed in the arts of necromancy, and set out to demonstrate their skills on each other.

Learic and Leanoric concoct their spells by travelling round the flip-screen landscape, collecting rare herbs and roots from the countryside. Herbs are collected by walking over them, and when the appropriate ingredients have been gathered, the wizard needs to return to his cauldron and start a brew to actually make the spell. When the ingredients are mixed, the charm is added to the wizard's armoury.

Each of the dozen spell potions require two herbal ingredients, and the recipes are contained in a leather-bound book. Pages from this magical manual are displayed in a window at the bottom of the main screen: pressing FIRE and the direction keys turns the pages of the tome. A spell cannot be cast until the specified herbs have been picked up, taken to the cauldron that rests outside Learic's hut and brewed into a spell.

CRITICISM

" If all of the BULLDOG games are going to be up to this standard, then The Best Of British label can look forward to a prosperous future. Just as I was getting bored with all the budget arcade adventures that have been coming out lately, Feud **comes into the office and changes my mind completely. The graphics are, without doubt, this program's most astounding feature. They are extremely colourful, large, and very detailed. All this without a hint of colour clash. MASTERTRONIC have launched their label in the best possible way – fabulous! "**

PAUL

The effects of spells range from making Learic invisible, to creating zombies, shooting lightning bolts and teleporting around the countryside. Some last for only one blast, whereas others (the teleport spell for instance) endure for some time. When the power of a spell potion is exhausted, the colours of the spell's ingredients on the recipe page return to black. Most spells don't require special expertise to cast, but some of the more important and dangerous ones (such as the Fireball spell) need to be practised before they work perfectly.

Your opponent, Leanoric, is not idle while you quest for ingredients – he stomps around the leafy glades collecting herbs and roots and concocts his own spells. A compass below the playing area shows Leanoric's position. If for instance, he is advancing on you from the south, the south point of the compass lights up. Leanoric freezes for a split second when he joins your wizard on a screen – an ideal moment to zap him with a spell.

CRITICISM

" Feud **is really good! The graphics are quite pleasing; things like the river and the gardens could have been made more realistic, but the effect is still there. The gameplay is packed, and the fun doesn't end once you've found the spells! The fact that your brother constantly follows you around keeps everything moving at a frantic pace; when you think you've got him on the run, he heals himself – Aargh! For £1.99,** Feud **is excellent value for money. Can we expect more like this from the BULLDOG label? I hope so . . . "**

MIKE

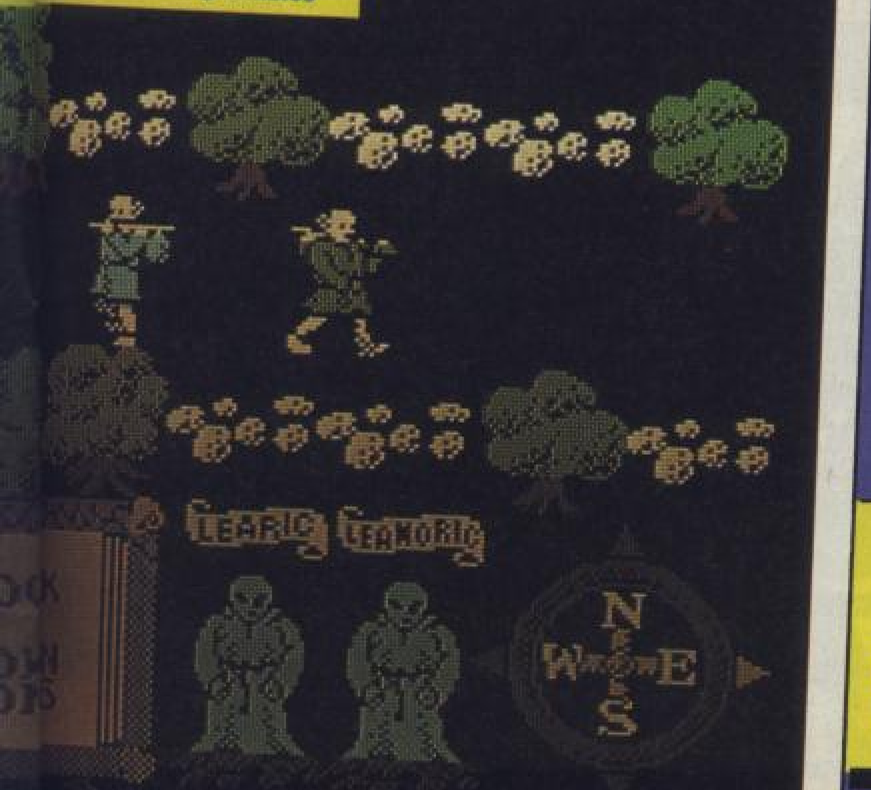
CRITICISM

" What a way to kick off a new label! Feud **is completely brilliant. I love original games, so it is a real pleasure to see a cheapie that's as 'new' in concept as this – and as playable. I haven't been able to force myself to play anything else today. The graphics are very good. The screens flip annoyingly, but the detail of the backgrounds and the superb animation of the characters make up for this. There is no music on the title screen, but the effects are fairly good. Your life won't be complete without** Feud**, especially at the price. "**

BEN

Statues in the status area represent the two magicians, and when a wizard casts a spell successfully the victim's statue slides a little deeper into the ground. The magician whose statue disappears first has lost the feud, owing to a terminal lack of energy.

...d by couple of peasants. With the ...m to Leanoric-bashing zombies





Producer: Bulldog Software
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Binary Design**

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, A down, O left, P right, SPACE fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: very pretty with little clash
Graphics: large, well-animated figures, and attractive settings
Sound: no title tune, but good spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: 120
General rating: An excellent start to a new label, which proves that budget arcade adventures are alive and well!

Presentation	79%
Graphics	90%
Playability	91%
Addictive qualities	90%
Value for money	96%
Overall	91%

TENTH FRAME

Producer: US Gold
Retail Price: **£8.99**
Author: **The US Gold Team**

There's no sign, as yet, of the Spectrum version of the classic *Leader Board* from the American software house ACCESS (the people behind games such as *Raid Over Moscow* and *Beach Head*). However the latest ACCESS offering to be converted for the Spectrum has a similar style to the aforementioned golfing simulation. *Tenth Frame* is a ten-pin bowling game that includes all the features found in the alleys.

Before play can begin an options screen is presented, firstly offering the choice between league or open bowling. If the former is chosen you then have to input the name of the playing teams, number of players on each team (up to four) and the number of games to play (from one to three). The latter option delivers a screen asking the user to input the number of players (from one to eight) their names, the ability level (either kids, amateur or professional) and the number of games to play. When this information has been input the bowling can begin.

The screen displays a natural 3D view of the bowling alley from a position above and behind the bowler. The bowler appears at the end of the alley and is moved left and right by use of keys. Pushing the 'forward' key activates a marker which appears halfway down the alley. Left and right moves it in those directions and using the marker you can aim where the ball is going to go (it crosses the marker as it travels down the alley). When everything is primed the bowler can be made to bowl the ball by pressing the fire button.



A 'speed and hook' gauge at the bottom of the screen is used to control the strength and curve of each players bowl. As the 'fire' button is depressed the speed indicator increases towards the speed zone. When it reaches this the 'fire' button has to be released (otherwise an error will be incurred) and upon release the hook gauge comes into action, the indicator sliding downwards towards the hook zone. When it reaches this the fire button should be pressed, again the timing is critical – too much hook either side of the hook zone could mean the ball missing the pins altogether.

Each player has two attempts at each set of ten pins, a score is given and the next player bowls. The game continues in this fashion, the score sheet being shown after every player has had their turn. The score is kept automatically, and incorporates all the different types of score, including spares, strikes and extras.

CRITICISM

● **" I am disappointed with** Tenth Frame**, it should have been so good. It loses out in gameplay because it simply isn't real enough – the pins behave in a totally unauthentic manner, so you have to learn the 'physics' of the game before you can begin to succeed. Having said that, if you discover the correct method, it is possible to obtain a maximum score without too much practice. If you're a bowling freak this may appeal to you – if not, I wouldn't waste your readies. "**

BEN



● " Tenth Frame *hasn't quite survived the transfer from the Commodore to the mighty Spectrum. Lost in the process is the sound and the atmosphere and a lot of the playability. The graphics are as good as can be expected – but a bit too 'wire-framey' to look very realistic. The game has all the basic features of bowling – unfortunately none of them are very well implemented or expanded upon. I'm sorry to say that* Tenth Frame *didn't really bowl me over (we're sorry that you said it as well Paul – Ed).* "

PAUL

● " Ten pin bowling isn't a game I would recommend for conversion to computer, especially not to the Spectrum. In fairness though, US GOLD have made a determined effort. Unfortunately, their efforts may well prove to have been in vain – the result isn't very good. The graphics are fairly average, with some nice animation on the bowler, but the game's biggest downfall is the annoying pause after every go. Overall, I think that *Tenth Frame* should be given careful consideration before purchase even by a dedicated fan of the sport. "

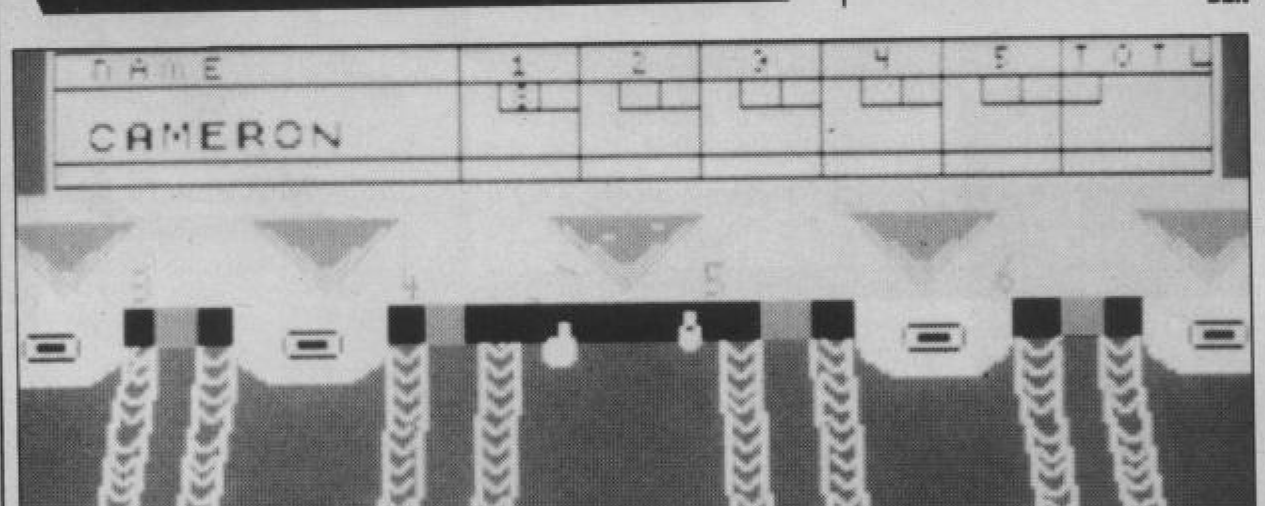
MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, A down, O left, P right, CAPS fire
Use of colour: unremarkable
Graphics: basic but functional
Sound: the occasional spot effect
Skill levels: three
Screens: one main playing screen and a score screen
General rating: A valiant attempt to convert a game that probably isn't suited to the Spectrum

Presentation	65%
Graphics	61%
Playability	59%
Addictive qualities	56%
Value for money	51%
Overall	55%

Ace kid super-bowler Cameron pulverises the pins





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SCALEXTRIC

Producer: Leisure Genius
Retail Price: **£9.95**
Author: **Andy Green**

For many people, the mere mention of the word 'Scalextric' conjures up visions of many happy hours spent piecing together plastic track sections. Now with this computer version of the old sitting-room floor racing game those moments can be relived. There is a choice of 17 ready-made tracks included, or a completely new track may be designed and built using a series of short sections.

When building a circuit, there are 15 different track elements to choose from. To begin with, there are four 'straight' components, each of a different length. Next come the 'chicanes,' where the track narrows to a single car width. These come in several forms: curved chicanes, straight chicanes and chicane entrance and exits. There are also skid chicanes where the track quickly narrows then broadens again.

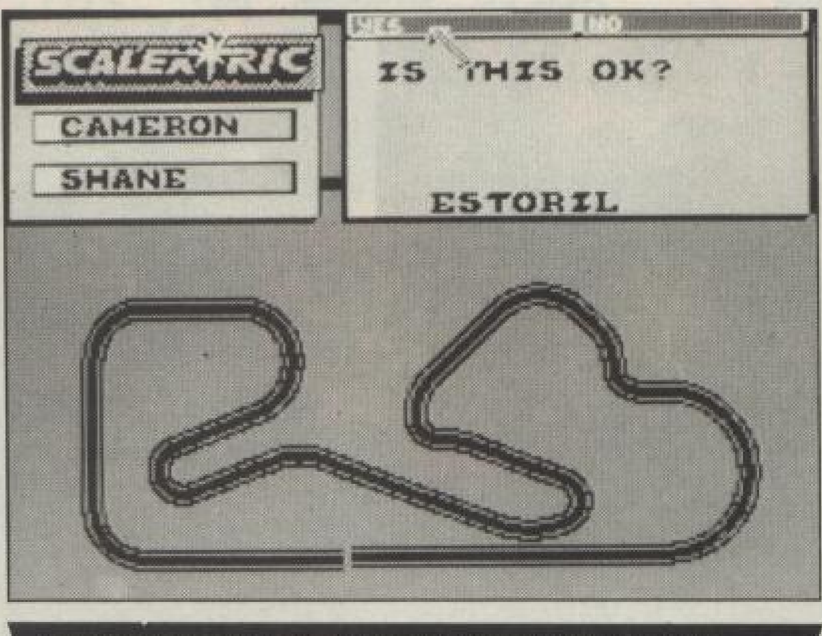
There are three different corner radii, 'inner' curves are tightest, followed by 'standard' and 'outer'. There is also a banked curve which has the standard radius.

Having positioned the first section, you place your cursor on the next piece of track required – pressing 'fire' then lays this in place, and so on until a circuit is completed. If you are unhappy with the result, you can choose to replace sections of the track, or alternatively scrap the whole design. To finish a circuit design, the two ends of the track must be quite close. Then the 'finish' icon is selected, and the computer informs you whether or not the two ends of the track can be joined. If not, another combination may be tried.

There's more to *Scalextric* than building tracks, however – after the circuit has been chosen the real racing can get underway. Two people can compete, or you can take on the computer which drives the car that appears on the lower window – the screen is split horizontally, with each portion showing the rear view of one of the competing cars (when the two cars are close to one another they appear on both screens). The screen also shows the twists and turns in the track ahead. The car's controls are accelerate, brake, steer left and right – gear-changes are dispensed with.

If the car exceeds a safe speed in a corner it starts to skid outwards. The maximum safe speed depends on the tightness of the curve, but exceeding the car's handling limits causes a collision with the verge. Hitting the grass causes the car to slow right down to 50 mph before it can be steered back onto the track. If two cars collide, the one at the back explodes – however, barging from the side is harmless to both vehicles.

A small map at the bottom of the screen shows the track layout and the position of each car, and the lap time achieved by the two drivers is given after every circuit of the track.



"Portugal looks nice Shane!" "Okay Cameron let's race there this time"

CRITICISM

● **" I was expecting great things from this – after all, what could be better than a Scalextric set without a dodgy transformer? Unfortunately** Scalextric **has turned out to be a below-average racing game, with an uninteresting little bit at the beginning. The graphics are initially good, but they get boring when you've seen all the tracks. The sound is nothing more than you would expect from a game of this quality – that is, a bog-standard engine noise. I'm very disappointed: surely LEISURE GENIUS could have come up with something a little more inspired. "**

BEN

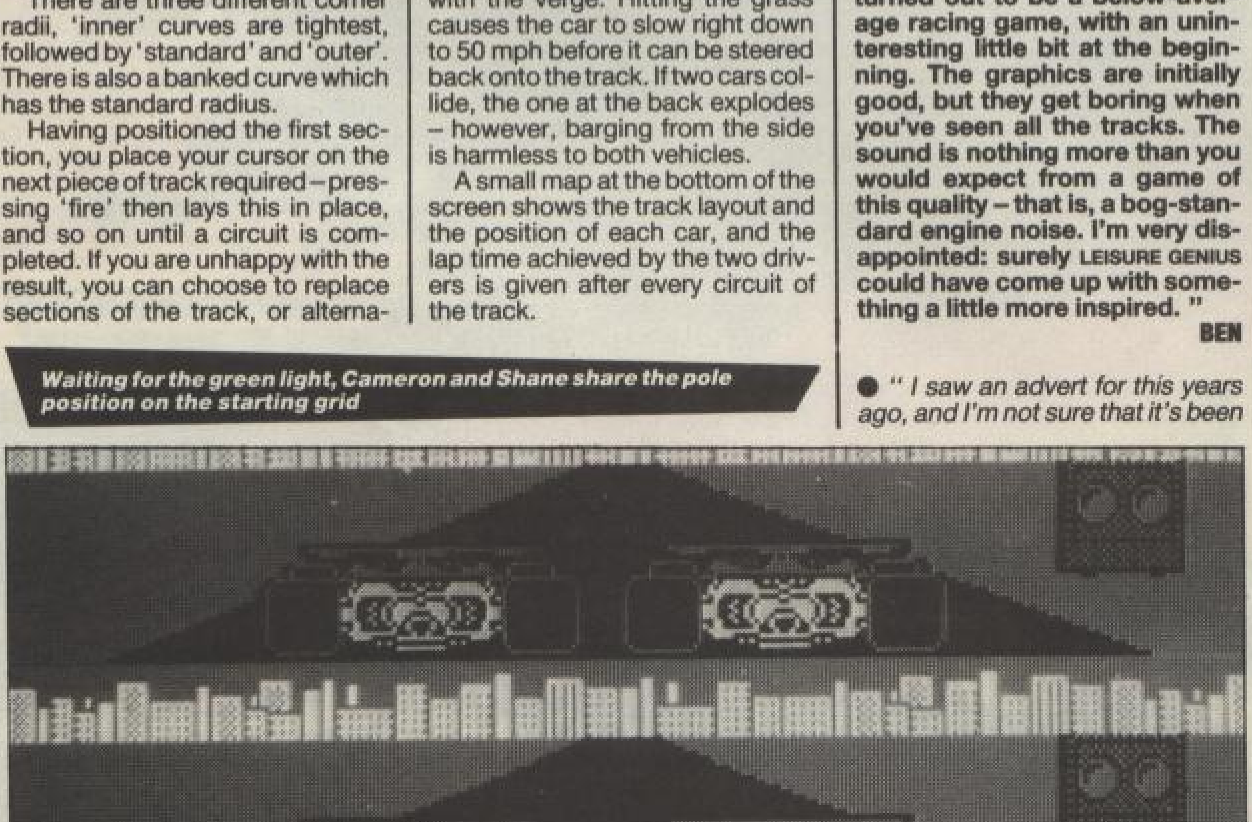
● *" I saw an advert for this years ago, and I'm not sure that it's been worth the wait.* Scalextric *isn't one of the best racing simulations around, but it does contain some very nice features that set it apart from other games of its type. The icon system is very easy to use, although getting a good track together can take some time. The cars are very well drawn with some good perspective graphics, but they're not responsive enough for a competitive game. If you really want to buy* Scalextric, *don't be fooled by the pretty graphics – insist on playing it first. "*

PAUL

● " *Scalextric* is alright, as far as racing games go – but it's all been done before. The track editor is very slick and useful, but I just can't see that there's that much of a market left for a race game. The graphics are fine, with few problems apart from the usual colour clashes. If you're not yet the owner of one of the many thousands of race games, then *Scalextric* is worth considering. Neatly done, and professionally packaged, it has everything going for it – apart from an original idea. "

MIKE

Waiting for the green light, Cameron and Shane share the pole position on the starting grid



COMMENTS

Control keys: definable: left, right, accelerate and brake
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: workmanlike
Graphics: good detail on cars
Sound: monotonous engine effect
Skill levels: one
Screens: two
General rating: A great idea, but lacking in gameplay

Presentation	81%
Graphics	70%
Playability	52%
Addictive qualities	52%
Value for money	52%
Overall	57%

128K ONLY

LITTLE COMPUTER PEOPLE

Producer: Activision
Retail Price: **£9.99**
Author: **Richard Gold**

All this talk about the new Plus 2 and 128 machines having compatibility problems is apparently a cover-up. What has really happened is that the computers have been invaded. Little Computer People (LCPs) have found their way into the machines and are tap dancing all over the data bases and really messing things up.

The only way to restore order amongst all this chaos is to tempt the little de-bugger out of the works and on to the computer screen. The way to do this is to provide him (they're all male, for some strange reason) with an environment he feels at home in. ACTIVISION have tried to do just that.

Each LCP has a different personality, but something they all have in common is their desire for friendship. Being locked away in all those nasty chips is no fun at all, and LCPs like nothing more than having their hair ruffled, or playing a game of cards with their human companion. To keep the little chap fit and healthy, he needs regular supplies of food and water and some dogfood for his canine chum.

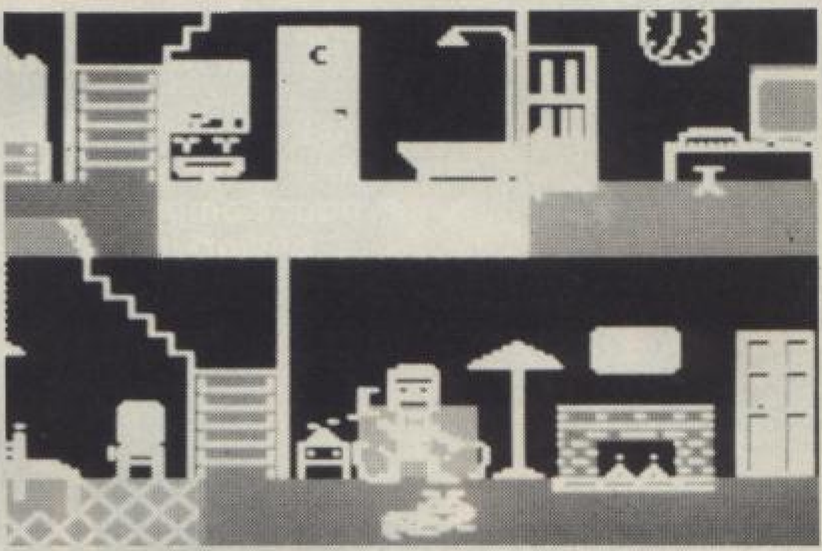
The House That ACTIVISION Built arrives on cassette, and loading it in equips your computer with all that is needed to cater for even the fussiest LCP. The top floor contains a television, stereo, typewriter and piano (most LCPs are brilliant pianists). The middle floor contains the bedroom, bathroom and computer room, and the ground floor contains his kitchen and sitting room.

The LCP leads a very active life, and occupies every minute of the day by pursuing one of his hobbies. Every morning he goes through his work-out routine to keep in shape; he watches television, plays with his computer, phones friends and even dances to his favourite records.

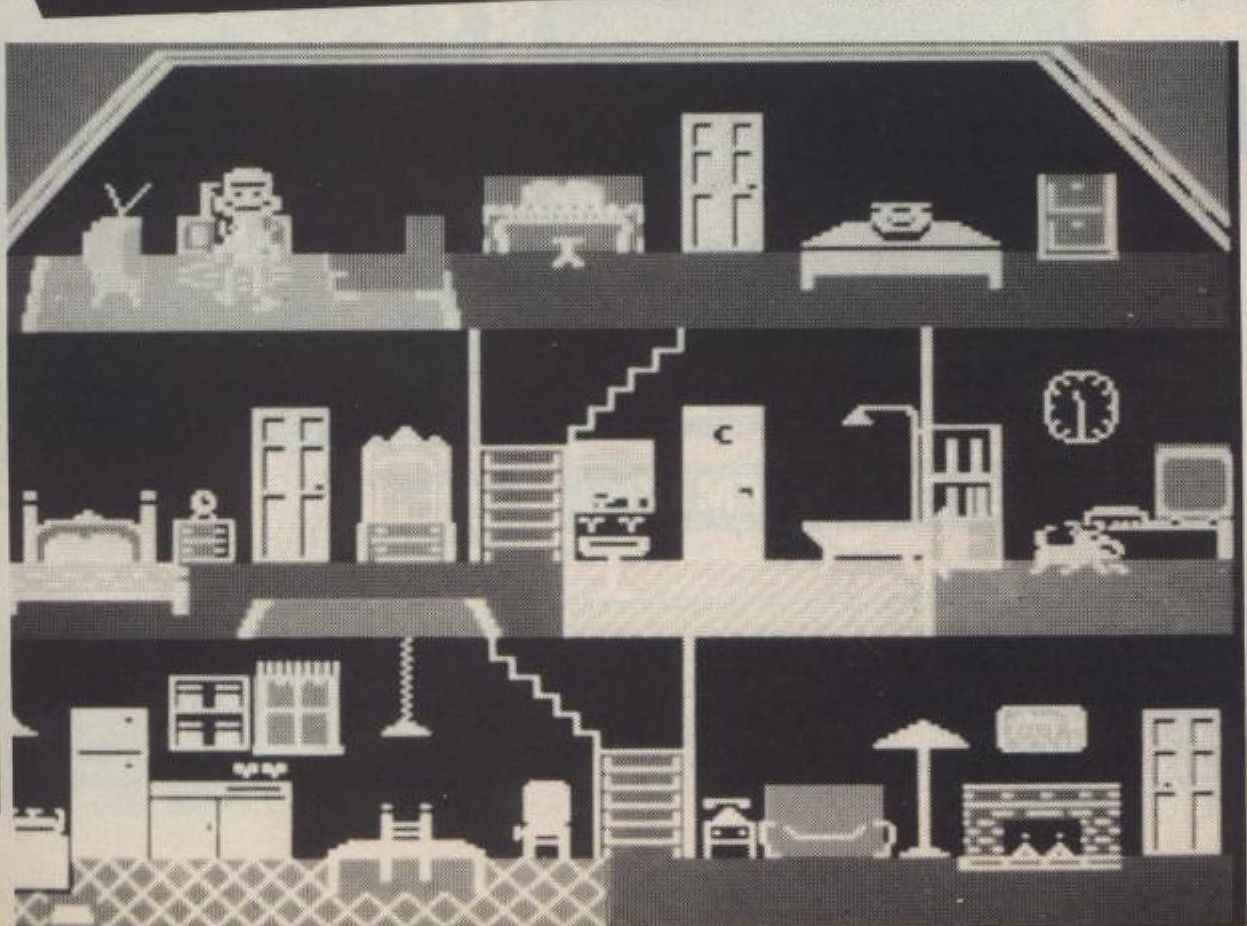
An LCP communicates with his human friend (or 'owner') in a number of ways. He bangs on the inside of the computer screen when he feels that you're not paying him enough attention, and if he's feeling particularly verbose, he may even type you a letter! In this way, keeper and LCP start to build up a rapport and become good friends. Paying lots of attention to the LCP is the best way gain his confidence. LCPs love presents, and by using the relevant keys gifts of all sorts can be left at the door for collection.

If, on the other hand, the LCP is ignored, he becomes very depressed. In serious cases of neglect, if he goes without food or water, he turns a nasty shade of green and goes to bed. Ignore him for too long, an your high-tech 'pet' is likely to fade away forever.

A Little Computer Person needs a lot of attention, but at least he doesn't leave stains on the carpet or scratch the furniture . . .



Sitting comfortably in the armchair, LCP phones a friend – you'll never understand his language!



Cameron's Little Computer Person grooves to the beat on the top floor of his house

CRITICISM

● **" As a concept for a computer entertainment package this is a good idea. A pet living in your computer, who has his own personality. This pet can be temperamental (even angry) at times, and happy and rewarding at others – brilliant! Unfortunately ACTIVISION seem to have forgotten the limitations of the Spectrum, so a great idea has lost a lot of its impact due to bad screen presentation and sloppy graphics. I'd only recommend this if you are desperate to see your computer doing something different. "**

BEN

● *" Yes folks, you can now live your life all over again for the minimal sum of ten pounds. Oh, and you're restricted to your own house – but we'll give you a dog and a new identity . . . Sorry, I'm afraid that LCPs aren't really as exciting as that. You have to watch another person live their own life – what could be more boring! LCP may appear cute to start with, but the novelty soon wears off. I couldn't really find anything addictive about this game, and I very much doubt that it will have the cult following on the Spectrum that it's got on other machines. Very much a minority interest. "*

PAUL

● " LCPs were all the rage when they first materialised on the Commodore. Looking at it now however, I can't help feeling that it is destined to become boring. The things you can order (ask?) your LCP to do, are limited, and though it may provide a terrific amount of excitement for the first few attempts, the appeal is only there for a while. The graphics are reasonable and colour is used very well on the background furniture. Worth looking at, but I think addictivity is severely limited. "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: (in conjunction with EXTENDED MODE key), F deliver food, W more water, A alarm, D deliver dog food, C ring phone, P scratch back, R deliver record, B deliver book
Joystick: N/A
Use of colour: colourful, if a bit messy . . .
Graphics: a very desirable residence
Sound: effects, depending on what your LCP is doing
Skill levels: one
Screens: one
General rating: An interesting concept, but not one likely to prove terribly addictive on the Spectrum

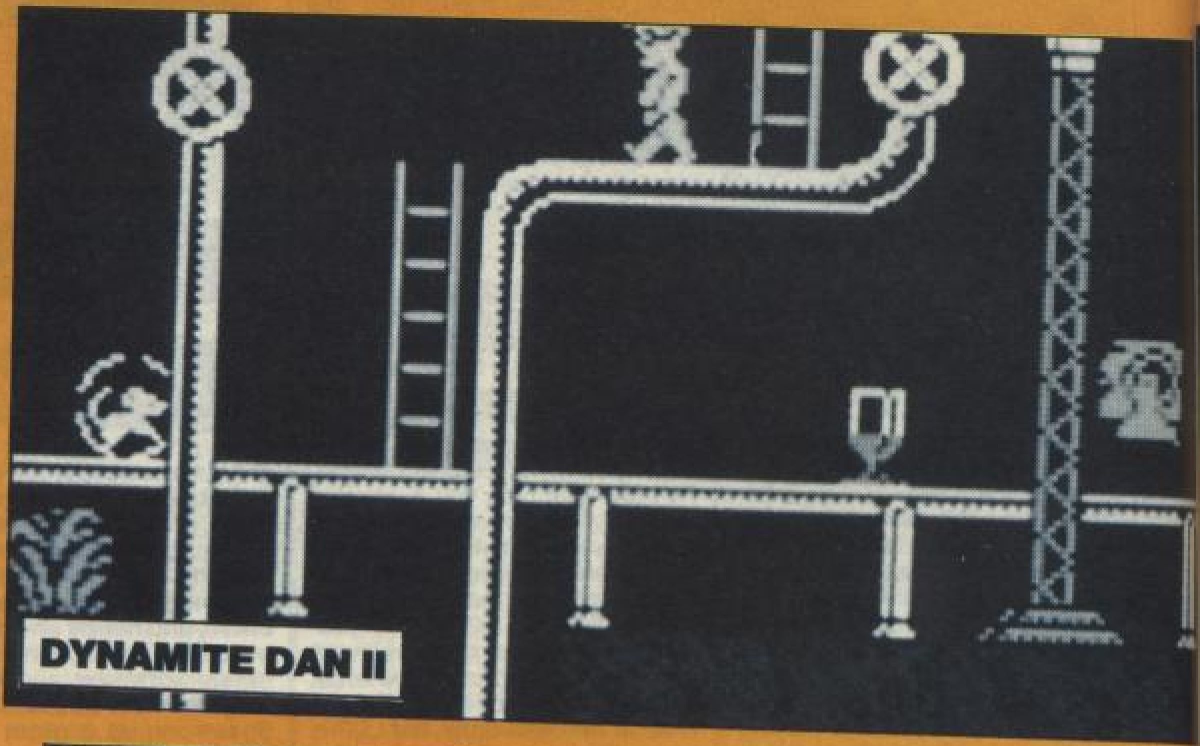
Presentation	83%
Graphics	72%
Playability	87%
Addictive qualities	40%
Value for money	53%
Overall	57%

THE 1986 CRASH RE

Readers' Awards

THE DEFINITIVE AWARDS FOR THE BEST SOFTWARE OF 1986!

At long last! After much moiling and toiling opening letters, reading your forms and inputting the data into a trusty APRICOT database (the poor Comps Minion has worn his fingers to the bone in the process of working out the Top Five in each category) we are proud to present . . . THE RESULTS!



DYNAMITE DAN II



THE GREAT ESCAPE

BEST GAME OVERALL

STARGLIDER
RAINBIRD

Andrew Onions (REALTIME SOFTWARE): "Ah, brill!! This is the first time we've received any sort of accolade in two and a half years. It's very nice to win but I think we can still do a lot better. We've scheduled a year for our next product and it should be worth looking forward to!"

GREAT ESCAPE
OCEAN
URIDIUM
HEWSON
QUAZATRON
HEWSON
GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS
ELITE

Even though it costs nearly twice as much as most 'full price' Spectrum games, *Starglider* clinched this prestigious award, netting 12.5% of the votes. Close behind with 9% of the votes was DENTON DESIGNS' wartime arcade adventure for OCEAN, *Great Escape* while the two GRAFTGOLD goodies published by HEWSON, *Uridium* and *Quazatron*, claimed 6% and 5.8% respectively. ELITE's coin-op conversion, *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*, scraped fifth position with a creditable 5% of the votes in this category.

BEST PLATFORM GAME

DYNAMITE DAN II
MIRRORSOFT

BOMBJACK
ELITE
COBRA
OCEAN
DAN DARE
VIRGIN
GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS
ELITE

There was no doubt about this category – *Dynamite Dan II* emerged a clear-cut winner, pounding the opposition into the ground with an enormous 50% of the votes. ELITE's *Bombjack* came next with 9.5% followed by *Cobra* with 7%. There wasn't much between *Dan Dare* and *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*, either – they took Fourth and Fifth place with 5% and 4% respectively.

BEST SHOOT 'EM UP

URIDIUM
HEWSON

LIGHTFORCE
FTL
COMMANDO
ELITE
STARGLIDER
RAINBIRD
STARSTRIKE II
REALTIME

This was a very hard-fought category, but finally HEWSON's horizontal scroller, *Uridium* came out tops with 26% of the votes. Breathing down its proverbial neck with 24% was the vertically-scrolling *Lightforce*. Trailing a long way behind with 10% came ELITE's *Commando* and two REALTIME products, *Starglider* and *Starstrike II*, with 7.5% and 5.5%.

READERS' AWARDS

BEST ARCADE ADVENTURE

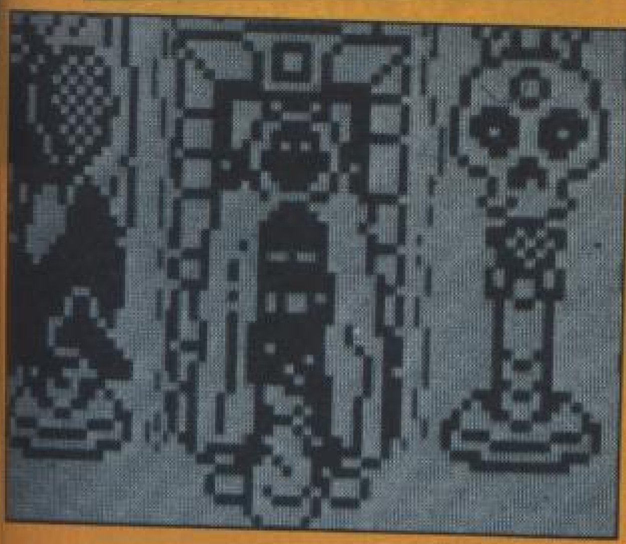
THE GREAT ESCAPE
OCEAN

Ally Noble (DENTON DESIGNS): "O-o-o-o-o-o-o-oh!!!! Ace! Marvellous!! Fab!!! What more can I say?"

HEAVY ON THE MAGICK
GARGOYLE GAMES
KNIGHT TYME
MAD
BATMAN
OCEAN
FIRELORD
HEWSON

DENTON DESIGNS' *The Great Escape* emerged a clear winner claiming 11% of the votes. However, second, third and fourth places were very fiercely contested with *Heavy on the Magick* finally amassing 7%, *Knight Tyme* following just behind with 6.9% and *Batman* coming in with 6%. HEWSON's *Firelord* brought up the rear with a respectable 4%.

BEST ADVENTURE



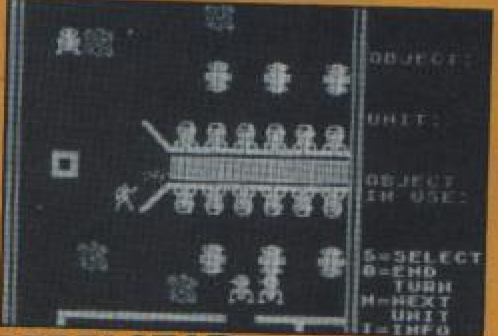
HEAVY ON THE MAGICK
GARGOYLE GAMES

Roy Carter: "It shows what excellent tastes CRASH readers have got! Seriously though, we're all really pleased. Those who voted will be pleased to hear that we're doing a follow-up sometime in the future."

THE BOGGIT
DELTA 4/CRL
THE PRICE OF MAGIC
LEVEL 9
LORD OF THE RINGS
MELBOURNE HOUSE
TWICE SHY
MOSAIC/LEVEL 9

GARGOYLE GAMES innovative *Heavy on the Magick* stomped away with this award, collecting 18% of the votes, while DELTA 4's humorous *Boggit* netted 14%. A little surprisingly, LEVEL 9 only managed third with the 9% claimed by *The Price of Magic* while MELBOURNE HOUSE's *Lord of the Rings* slipped into the Number Four slot with 7%. *Twice Shy* reaped 4% of the accounted votes and was awarded Fifth Place accordingly.

BEST STRATEGY GAME

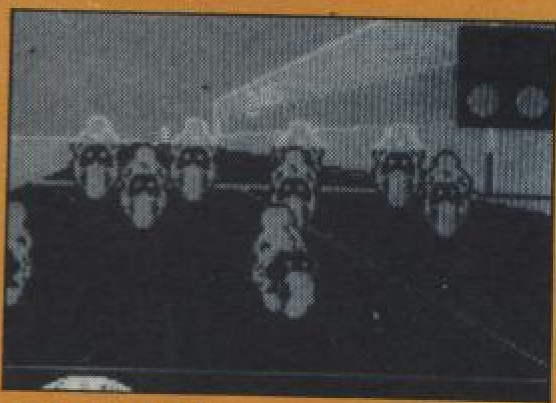


REBELSTAR
FIREBIRD

NAPOLEON AT WAR
CCS
THEATRE EUROPE
PSS
THEIR FINEST HOUR
HUTCHINSON/CENTURY
DESERT RATS
CCS

Romping away with this award was **FIREBIRD**'s budget re-release, *Rebelstar*, amassing 15% of the votes. The following positions were hotly contested with CCS' historic wargame, *Napoleon at War*, collecting 7%, *Theatre Europe* with 6.8%, *Their Finest Hour*, 6%, and *Desert Rats* with 5%. Strange But True Dept: *The Great Escape* came Sixth . . . an odd choice for a strategy game . . .

BEST SIMULATION

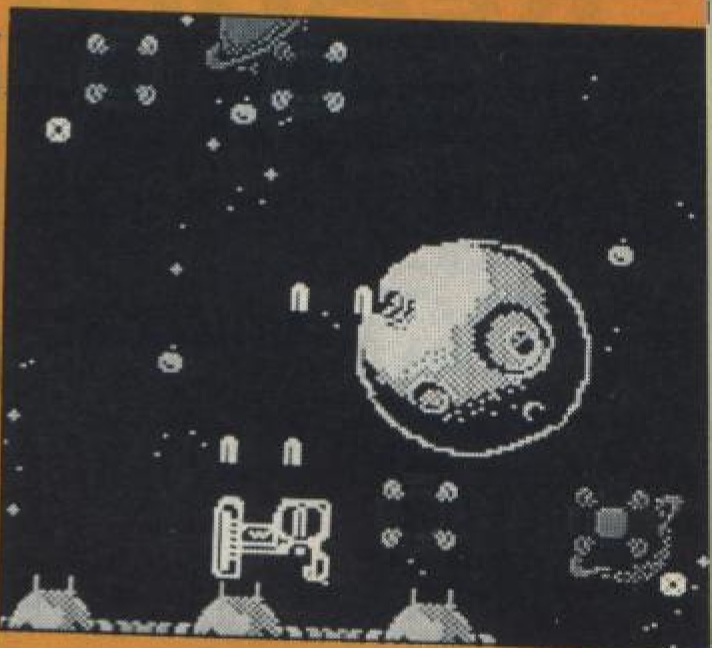


TT RACER
DIGITAL INTEGRATION

Dave Marshall (DIGITAL INTEGRATION) "Marvellous! I'm very pleased that we're keeping up with people's expectations. We're already working on the next simulation which should improve upon the quality of our recent products."

TOMAHAWK
DIGITAL INTEGRATION
SPITFIRE 40
MIRRORSOFT
ACE
CASCADE
STRIKE FORCE HARRIER
MIRRORSOFT

DIGITAL INTEGRATION dominated this category – their motorcycle racing simulation, *TT Racer*, proved to be the most popular, taking 25% of the votes. Very close behind with 24% came *Tomahawk*, the helicopter simulation. Three flight simulators followed next – *Spitfire 40*, *ACE* and *Strike Force Harrier*, netting 9.5%, 7% and 4% respectively.



BEST GRAPHICS

LIGHTFORCE
FTL

Roy Carter: "Greg Follis will be thrilled. It's very pleasing to know that someone out there appreciates your hard work."

STARSTRIKE II
REALTIME

Ian Onions (REALTIME SOFTWARE): "It's nice that people noticed. It's shame the gameplay wasn't as good as the graphics, though . . ."

TRAPDOOR
PIRANHA
GREAT ESCAPE
OCEAN
BATMAN
OCEAN

Lightforce's beautiful vertically scrolling graphics proved to be the most popular in this category with 11% of the votes. Collecting 9% were the stunning *Starstrike II* 3D graphics, and not far behind was cuddly Berk's *Trapdoor* with 7%. *The Great Escape* came fourth with 6.5% while *Batman* amassed 5%.

BEST MUSIC

PING PONG
IMAGINE

COBRA
OCEAN
DYNAMITE DAN II
MIRRORSOFT
GLIDER RIDER
QUICKSILVA
MIKIE
IMAGINE

An interesting result, given the attention given to music charts in the FORUM recently. Runaway winner in this category with 21% of the votes was the very impressive title screen tune to IMAGINE' *Ping Pong*. Second came the noisy, yet tuneful *Cobra*, with 9% while *Glider Rider* and *Dynamite Dan II* tied for third place with 7.5% apiece. Dancing neatly into fifth position came *Mikie*, collecting 4.5% in the process.

THE 1986 CRASH READERS' AWARDS

BEST SOUND FX

DYNAMITE DAN II
MIRRORSOFT

COBRA
OCEAN
STARGLIDER
RAINBIRD

Graham Baird (REALTIME SOFTWARE): "It now seems worth the two days we spent sitting down with a multimeter measuring the Spectrum's power output. That was the most boring job I've ever done – it was mind-numbingly tedious."

FIRELORD
HEWSON
QUAZATRON
HEWSON

First, second and third places were fought for fiercely, with *Dynamite Dan II* finally coming out tops with 10% of the votes. *Cobra*'s 8.5% earned it a second position while the 8% claimed by *Starglider* grabbed third. *Firelord* was next with 6% and Steve Turner's noisy *Quazatron* came in a respectable fifth with 5%.

BEST PROGRAMMER

STEPHEN CROW

Stephen Crow: "I'm really, really surprised. I'm starting a new game with shoot 'em up overtones which I hope will be more spontaneous and exciting than *Firelord.*"

KEITH BURKHILL
JONATHAN SMITH
DAVID JONES
STEVE TURNER

There was very little competition involved in this category it seemed – Stephen Crow, author of *Starquake* and *Firelord*, received 16% of the votes – exactly twice as many as second-placed Keith Burkhill. OCEAN's Jonathan Smith came a respectable third with 7%, with David Jones, the man behind the *Knight Tyme* and *Spellbound* series, coming in Fourth with 5%. Steve Turner managed Fifth with 4%.

BEST SOFTWARE HOUSE

ELITE

Steve Wilcox (Joint Director): "I'm very pleased and would like to extend thanks to all contributing programmers and, of course, the CRASH readers for voting us in. Next year will be an exciting one for Spectrum owners as we are planning to release more titles than we did last year. So hopefully we'll be having the same conversation in 1988."

OCEAN
HEWSON
IMAGINE
GARGOYLE


STARGLIDER

There were absolutely no arguments in this section whatsoever. ELITE, the coin-op kings collected a staggering 36% of the votes – three times as many as runners-up OCEAN, who claimed a relatively meagre 12%. Just behind came HEWSON with 9%, IMAGINE followed with 5%. GARGOYLE GAMES did well to slip into Fifth position with 4.5%.

BEST ADVERTISEMENT

GREAT ESCAPE
OCEAN

COBRA
OCEAN
FIRELORD
HEWSON
FAIRLIGHT II
THE EDGE
CONTACT SAM CRUISE
MICROSPHERE

The Great Escape's simple, yet powerful image of hands gripping barbed wire proved to be immensely popular and reaped 22% of the total votes. The sweaty action man, Sylvester Stallone, pictured on the *Cobra* advert came next with 6.5% and *Firelord* followed closely behind with 6%. *Fairlight II* came in fourth with 3.5% and *Contact Sam Cruise* scraped fifth place with 2.5%, only receiving one more vote than *Thanatos.*

LEAST PLEASING GAME

WORLD CUP CARNIVAL
US GOLD

KNIGHT RIDER
OCEAN
REALM OF IMPOSSIBILITY
ARIOLASOFT
KUNG-FU MASTER
US GOLD
STREETHAWK
OCEAN

There were no questions about the winner of this less than flattering award. US GOLD's horribly tacky *World Cup Carnival* proved itself to be the most popular of the 'worst buys', claiming 18% of all the votes. The terminally dull *Knight Rider* came second with 7% while ARIOLASOFT's crude and crummy *Realm of Impossibility* slid into third with 4.5%. US GOLD grabbed a further 3% of the voters with their fourth placed *Kung-Fu Master* and the very disappointing *Street Hawk* came fifth with 2.5%.

STATE OF THE ART AWARD

STARGLIDER
RAINBIRD

Graham Baird (REALTIME SOFTWARE): "I'm shocked . . . "

LIGHTFORCE
FTL
HEAVY ON THE MAGICK
GARGOYLE GAMES
GREAT ESCAPE
OCEAN
URIDIUM
HEWSON

This prestigious award was won by *Starglider*, which received 14.5% of the total votes. The 11% netted by *Lightforce* gained it a close second, and GARGOYLE GAMES picked up the accolade of the Third position with *Heavy on the Magick* which collected 5.5% of the votes. *The Great Escape* came in fourth with 4.5%, and just edging into fifth was *Uridium.*

So there we have it – the CRASH Readers Awards for 1986. Thanks to everyone who took the trouble to vote, and congratulations to all the programmers and software houses who received awards – your trophies will be despatched shortly.

Well, that's another year in the bag – and another ten forms out of it! The following lucky voters each win £20 worth of software and a CRASH T-Shirt . . .

David Drury, Rowley Regis, W Mids; Leighton Davies, Newtown, Powys; Oliver Leeds, Tonbridge, Kent; Leon Aresti, Newbury Park, Essex; Toby Lyons, Ryde, Isle of Wight; Spencer Tillett, Rainham, Kent; Jonathan Archer, Croyde, N Devon; Graham Seeney, Scarborough, N Yorks; Chris Smith, Dinas Powys, S Glam; JA Frost, Stonehouse, Glos.

GREYFELL

Producer: Starlight Software
Retail Price: **£8.99**
Author: **Mick Eatock and Simon Welland**

Greyfell is an ancient land ruled over by Mauron The Evil. Norman the Wise (a cat of no particular ambition) hears tales of this sad land from the great wizard Hitormis, whilst quaffing a few too many in his local. According to legend, Mauron stole the Orb of Life and in so doing, sentenced the land to a future without love or peace. A drunken ambition is kindled in Norman's feline breast. He staggers out, vowing to destroy the evil one and return Greyfell to the tranquility it once knew.

What a rash cat, you may think, but curiosity . . .

Norman is soon embroiled with many enemies, out to prevent him succeeding. Rats, Wolves, Crocodiles, Dragons, Minotaurs, those old favourites – Killer Tomatoes – and even Cat-eating Plants burst forth from all over the place.

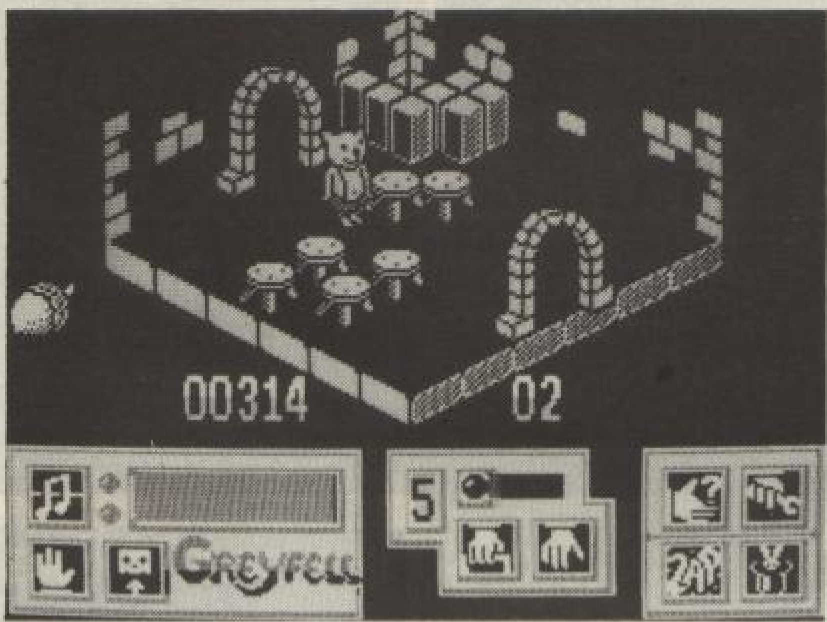
These creatures can be despatched with a quick spot of fisticuffs, but Norman also has three spells he can summon up. Physical fighting drains stamina, but, worse, the spells are finite and care should be exercised to conserve them for really tight spots. Stamina, on the other hand, can be replenished by eating plants (walking over them). Stamina is shown as a can of beans – if all the beans vanish, Norman Tiddles loses one of his nine lives . . . how appropriate.

The adventure element in *Greyfell* is supplied through action icons, seen at the screen base. Pressing fire while Norman is stationary accesses icon mode. With the icons, spells can be selected and fired (unless supplies run dry), objects can be picked up or dropped, and the last selected object can be used. There are also facilities for pausing the game, saving current position to tape and toggling the sound on or off.

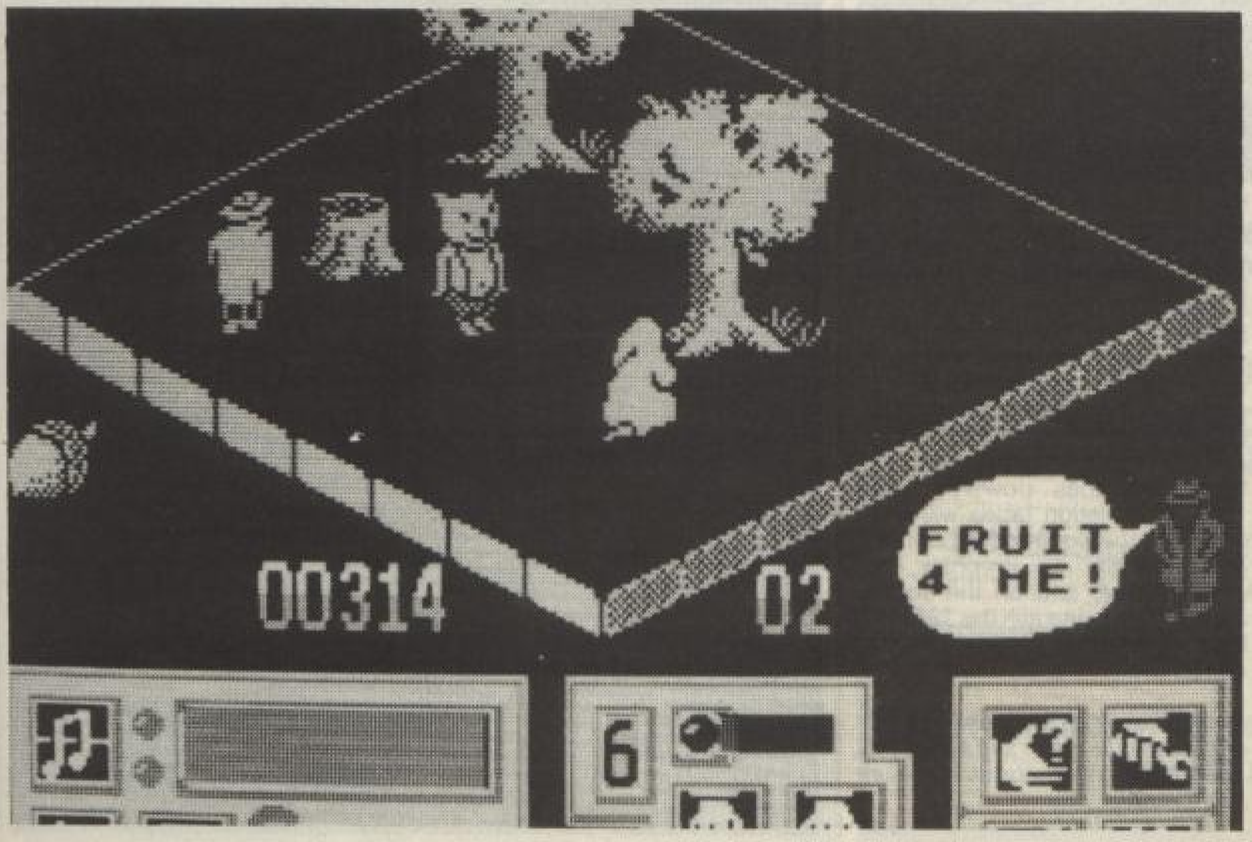
Some Greyfellians are pleasant, and are even helpful when they offer clues as to which objects might be collected and to whom they may most usefully be given. Clues appear as speech bubbles in cryptic form like "Fe2Cu". Having pondered on the possible meaning, Norman can hare off to get the required object.

Greyfell is traversed on foot using the cardinal compass points. Pressing against an object allows Norman to cat-jump onto it, if it's low enough. He can also enter the small huts encountered along the way, the scene cutting to their interiors. There may be a series of flip-screen rooms inside, seen *Alien 8* style. Norman's objective is to seek out Mauron in his lair, and return the orb to its rightful place in the cup of sorrows. Success is measured 'arcade style' by the number of nasties killed, and adventure style, by the percentage of quests completed.

Norman can't see the doors for the milking stools



A shady character gives Norman a not-so-cryptic clue



CRITICISM

● **" An impressive debut from STARLIGHT. The plot is original, if perhaps slightly tacky. The graphics are cute – the 3D forced perspective screen layout works well, and the characters are endearing. Sound is also well above average with a few tunes and a worthy amount of effects.** Greyfell **falls over one giant stumbling block: its gameplay – it left me cold. Stomping around the playing area fighting off the meanies just isn't fun. After a few goes I'd had enough. Not playable or addictive enough for me to recommend. "**

BEN

● *" This is a lovely game to launch a new software label with. But despite the flashy loader and pretty graphics, the game breaks no new boundaries. The screens are superbly drawn, pleasing to the eye and offer one of the best 3D views I've seen. The icon-driven section is a bit too cumbersome to use quickly, and things are generally too slow for the average arcade player. The strong adventure elements make it more likely to appeal to adventure players than arcade fans. It's a decent little game, and well worth a look. "*

PAUL

● " *Greyfell* is very well presented. It has excellent graphics, and a very neat loading sequence. The 3D effect is superbly executed, but unfortunately, the game moves slowly. The fact that there are far too many meanies makes it much more unplayable than it could have been. This is a pity, because if the game had had as much playability as it has polish, then I think this new label would have been off to a flying start. As it stands, I think *Greyfell* is very well produced, but lacking in the playability department. "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable: walk north, walk east, walk south, walk west, fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor
Use of colour: limited
Graphics: 3D monochrome graphics
Sound: a chirpy tune at the beginning and spot effects throughout
Skill levels: one
Screens: 120 plus
General rating: Not very original, but this is almost rectified by the highly polished presentation.

Presentation	86%
Graphics	84%
Playability	61%
Addictive qualities	59%
Value for money	59%
Overall	67%

LLOYD MANGRAM'S



FORUM

With the demands on my time that LM makes, I have the feeling that I am not going to be able to keep up with the weeding once Spring has sprung (which it is showing every sign doing any day now).

Still, enough of my preoccupations and on with this month's selection of letters. The arcade debate started by Mr Evans provoked a flood of angry letters – a raw nerve was obviously touched there. But the Letter of the Month and accompanying £20 of software goes to a female person this month, for her well-reasoned contribution to the POKEs debate . . .

IN PRAISE OF POKES

Dear Lloyd
Once upon a time, I bought a game called *Avalon*, I thought it was very good but didn't get very far with it. Before I could select the servant spell, get a key and try it in the door I was dead. Old fumble fingers here couldn't do it so the game got left on the shelf. Then a friend came with a listing he called a POKE (understand, this was before I discovered CRASH). I was instructed on how to use a POKE, so the old game got dusted off and tried again. This time it was brilliant – all the time that I needed was there to discover what did what and how.

The result is I feel I've got my money's worth from this game and wasn't ripped-off after all. I'm searching everywhere for *Dragontorc* – no luck though – any ideas?

My point is aimed at that raised in Richard Yendall's letter (Issue 37) saying 'don't print POKEs'. Please please, ignore the chap.

I appreciate that as a female my views may be different concerning computer games. For instance, I feel in no competition to complete a game before anyone else, nor do I dump a game because so-and-so in the 4th Year can score millions and I can't get through the third screen. Nor do I feel in competition with the programmer. I play games solely for entertainment. I don't understand Mr Yendall's views on programmers at all. Sometimes I read the last chapter in a book before reading the middle, but so what? If that's how I get the most enjoyment from a book, and have paid for it, why not? Is the author really going to throw up his hands in horror and forbid me to buy any more of his books? Of course not, he's selling books to make money. I don't think programmers are much different.
Linda Rigby, Tuebrook, Liverpool

An interesting perspective on the non-competitive school of games playing, Linda. I think your arguments surrounding the use of POKEs are well-reasoned and very sensible. I'm in generous mood, so you might like to claim Dragontorc *as part of your £20 software prize for Letter of the Month.*
LM

128 PONDERINGS

Dear Lloyd
I hate to use your precious pages as a speaking pedestal, but:
1) Could software houses please adopt some universal logos involving 128K products with or without independent 128K version. Some inlays are printed 48K/128K, 128Plus/128K,48K and some have nothing branded on them. Aaarrghh! It's very confusing as most shops these days take out the instruction leaflets for display purposes.
2) Could OCEAN please stop churning out 'big-name money-spinners' that turn out to be rubbish? (*Knight Rider, Miami Vice* and so on.) The only two games of any calibre recently from OCEAN are *Cobra* and *Top Gun. Come on OCEAN please just release quality software. Fair enough, after such massive advertising campaigns it's hard to back down on releasing a game. Take Street Hawk* for example, it took ages to come out and when it did it was crap. But, surely folks would rather wait longer for a better program. And now think, think deep, think back – OCEAN used to produce the bestest software in the whole wide Bwittish Isles.

3. And now to make my letter have even less effect. Hats off to OCEAN for bringing out a 128K compilation package. What a great idea! We need more of these I say. (Cue *Dambusters* Theme Music). These compilation packages could be the heart and spirit of every 128K Spectrum (or Plus 2) owner. In the ever-developing war of rivalry between the Spectrum and Commodore owners, our two latest machines powered with 128K compilation tapes will help us defeat the Commodore owners on playability on graphics, on addictiveness and on the sound capabilities. Long live the 128.
Paul Robinson, Doyne, Perthshire

Glad to hear that someone has lots of positive things to say about the 128 Plus 2! What about Top Gun *and* Cobra *. . .*
LM

IT'S THE GAME THAT COUNTS

Dear Lloyd
I am very sorry to disappoint all the moaning minnies, but there is no limit to improvement on the humble 48K! Those who think so are in the same position as people in the early 20th century who 'proved' it was impossible to run a 4-minute mile – in fact there will always be improvement to athletic records. That doesn't mean that a mile would be ran in 1 second in the year 2087 because although the number of record-breaking runs will continue at the same rate, the margin of reduction will decrease.

Similarly, it will always be possible to write better programs, but the rate of progress will slow. And by perhaps 1988/89 a simpler course of action might be to get a more powerful computer. But is it worth it? The point should be, that if you have a good game it has practically infinite possibility – for example chess is superficially simple but is unimprovable as a game that can be played endlessly be an individual without repetition. And personally I believe that game such as *Knight Lore (pick your own similar classic, don't quibble on that account!) in practice is similarly unimprovable (though unfortunately possible to complete) – you just don't need better sound (a silly and eventually irritating distraction), 200 colours, different wall detail in every room and so on.*

How, for example, can you better Cobra *as a game, rather than as a pretty spectacle for the non-player? (Bring on* Cobra II, *more levels please!).*

So cheer up one and all! The game's the thing – you can play chess with pieces six feet high that move on their own, fight with real weapons and die dramatically, but in the long run you'll have more fun with a classic set bought for £2.00. Long live the Spectrum!
Bill McClelland, 18 Thames Close, Cove, Farnborough, Hants.

I tend to agree with your sentiments, Bill. Although the new generation of 16-bit computers like the Atari ST and Commodore Amiga have a great deal of potential when it comes to sound and graphics, such added facilities are all gloss if there isn't a good, playable game underneath all the impressive presentation. There's plenty of scope for new, innovative game ideas that take advantage of the pool of programming knowledge that has been created around the Spectrum. All we need is the innovative people . . .
LM



A PROGRAMMER WRITES . . .

Dear Lloyd
Being the author of *Fat Worm Blows a Sparky*, I would first like to take this opportunity to disclaim any responsibility for the embarrassing name, the gross painting of the green maggot on its cover and any choice of colour during the gameplay – this was supposed to make people laugh.

What I really want to say is that this being my first independently original Spectrum game after several previous low-key ventures with BBC games, I looked forward to the reactions from the multitudinous Spectrum publications which I was surprised to find existed.

Of course CRASH instantly recognised programming genius and gave the game a 95% CRASH Smash. Later in that month, October, I discovered a mention in POPULAR COMPUTING WEEKLY where in John Cook's private column, Software Hotlines, the program was slammed along with the programmer – he called them a Dodo and Basket Weaver respectively. YOUR SINCLAIR cheered things up shortly afterwards with a megagame rating. Following that was three out of five stars from SINCLAIR USER and an average of 6.5 out of 10 from C&VG. ZX MONTHLY completed my collection yesterday, with a GRIM rating.

Now, could anyone in the CRASH Towers possibly account for the enormous range of reactions from reviewers on the same game? And secondly, why outstanding reviews from the two best-selling magazines as well as a moderately large advertising campaign have not influenced the popularity of this particular title? Does it come down to the fact that the people who buy the products do not ultimately play the game (eg parents?) and do not read reviews or see adverts and will only be swayed by the cover and the name, which would explain the success of licensed film products.

Do I actually see before me five months of days and nights over my entire summer with hardly any breaks go completely to waste owing to the triviality of someone's choice of name and a poor artist's conception of a worm?
Julian Todd, Cambridge

I'm sure there's more to it than a 'strange' choice of name and a giant green maggot on the cover. Perhaps your game fell into the trap that catches many innovative games – people seem happier to stick with a straightforward game concept, especially if a 'Big Name' is associated with it.

As for the variation in opinion amongst computer magazines – it happens all the time. Reviewers can only pass subjective comment on games, and opinions are very personal. Readers don't always agree with reviewers, as I so often see in the mail I receive for the FORUM!

LM

RABBITTING ON . . .

Dear Lloyd
I think it ought to be brought to your attention that there is a nasty fiend on the top of the Editorial page of your magazine.
For the last three years the aforementioned bug has been beating up a poor, defenceless little rabbit. I think it's about time the rabbit got its own back.

If the situation is not remedied in the near future, I shall set my man-eating goldfish on you.
Nicola Weston, Basingstoke, Hants

Take another look!

LM

TAMARA AND TAMARA

Dear Lloyd
I have read many stories in my time, but this was incredible – I know **Mel Croucher** is known for his totally original computer games, and how little effect they have on the public, but TAMARA KNIGHT has got to be his best idea yet – a totally original story in fact. The way he twists the spoken word makes Hunter S Minson look like a scriptwriter for Bill and Ben. Not only is it incredibly convoluted and complex, it is also stunningly funny and had me in hysterics from the first paragraph. So much is packed into each sentence . . . I don't know how he keeps it up, but I think that Mel Croucher has fulfilled an aim in life by completing a literary version of *Pimania* – both are highly addictive and are liable to turn you into an hysterical raving maniac.

I just hope this doesn't happen before next month's instalment . . . Gibber!
Stephen Graham, Carlisle, Cumbria

Glad you like it, Stephen . . .

LM

THE HACKERS WRITE . . .

Dear Lloyd
We write in protest to **Richard Yendall** in the POKEs debate. A programmer does not always strike a balance between the game being too easy or too hard – take *Legend of Kage* for instance, ten minutes (that's exaggerated) of playing and you've rescued the princess, WOW, a lot of thought went into that game (we thought UDG's were dead). Then on the other hand there are games like *Frost Byte* or *Olli and Lissa* that are a little hard to complete without POKEs. A person's money is not wasted if he/she uses POKEs to complete a game, because he/she may have stuffed the game on a shelf to gather dust because he/she was sick of it. In this respect POKEing can bring a game back to life. However, we believe a game can be over-POKEd, like *Jet Set Willy* (RIP) – or take the case of the *Elite* editor published in another mag, which was far too long and ruined a perfectly good game. It is up to the reader to decide when to use a POKE published in a mag. We're not sure that everybody goes out, buys a game, puts in the pokes, completes it and bins it like Mr Yendall seems to think.

How sorry he is for the poor programmer that made the game . . . rubbish! What about that whiz-programmer that made *Spindizzy*, er, **Phil Graveyard** or something . . . the one Hannah is always grovelling to. He's forever POKEing other people's games.

If Dicky boy had bothered to examine some of the loaders on games he would be surprised how unconcerned the programmers are, as they often leave lots of messages for us hackers. Take a look at some of ELITE's loaders, where you get messages from a bloke from XCEL who likes Prince and can't spell. Programmers love to show off. The ALKATRAZ protection system (on *Bobby Bearing*) is a challenge to break: they're just enticing hackers to try to break it. (*Speedlock* claimed it would ruin your insanity!).

Mr 'I'm too clever for my own good' Skunk from Fife got around the *Bobby Bearing* type of protection. Well just leave it to us from Haxby and Pock, Jock. We not only supply POKEs but where possible, we supply solutions so the reader can have a choice of whether to type in the POKEs or use the solution to advantage.

Yours in fear and loathing (Yes we like Hunter S, even though nobody knows what he is talking about)
The industrious hackers from Haxby and Pocklington.

Thanks, lads

LM



POSTAL PALS PLEASE

Dear Lloyd
I am writing to you to ask if you could spare some of your precious space in your magazine and print my name and address and a plea for a penpal. I am fourteen and own a Spectrum Plus. I have over 150 software titles and am a keen games player. I would like any other Spectrum owners of the same interests to write to the above address.

Yours grovellingly
Mark McIlwraith, 67 Lomond Crescent, Whitburn, West Lothian, EH47 0EG

Dear Lloyd
Please, please please, please, please, could you print my request for a penpal. I often write away but hardly ever get replies. This way I can have as many as I want.
David Munday, 4 Albert Road, St Peters, Broadstairs, Kent

Dear Lloyd
I am desperately seeking a Spectrum-owning penpal, preferably a girl, but it doesn't matter if it is a boy. Please can you help me?
Gareth Sullivan, 108 Maple Road South, Sebastopol, Pontypool, Gwent, NP4 5AR



PRE-JUDGING THE ISSUE?

Dear Lloyd
I don't have a computer, but my brother has a 48K Spectrum and is a fan of your magazine, which is why I read CRASH and why I'm writing now. I believe your game reviews are commendable in that for people with limited cash flow (like my brother) there has to be a guide on the good, the bad and the ugly. What apalls me however is the amount of games that are churned out, of terrible quality.

Without magazine reviews, buying games would be financial human roulette. But the reviewing (as good as it is) does not go far enough. Why cannot an independent review board be established by mutual consent of as many companies as possible, whereby, before every game hits the market, it must be reviewed by the board, and given a percentage rating with a breakdown of individual traits – your system in other words. Every copy of every game reviewed must then carry this rating clearly, providing an instant guide to the buyer.

Of course, you might claim that a judgement by the board would be subject to individual preference: any review is subjective but people place a lot of faith in you. Just to make things fairer, why not classify each game the board sees into categories, to be shown with the review percentage of arcade-adventure, shoot 'em up and so on. In case you're worried, people would still be buying CRASH for an in-depth review, but a monthly publication means large time-gaps before games are reviewed. As soon as a game reaches the shops it will now have at least some measure of its worth.

Before you point out that this board would probably not include every company, it is obvious that good companies with nothing to hide would jump at the chance to have their games given high percentages and it would encourage them to higher standard because they would make sure that their game was up to scratch rather than have it publicly panned. Should a company refuse to take a part in the system, then a boycott could be instigated against that company's games – by refusing to take part they'd be showing lack of confidence in their own games anyway.

Michael McGuiness, Monley Hill, Liverpool

It all sounds very sensible and reasonable on the surface, Michael, but your system reminds me a little too much of Big Brother and the totalitarian approach – it would remove too much of the element of free choice from both software houses and games purchasers.

Effectively, people have the option of reading a review before they purchase a game the way things are at the moment – and every now and again a software house will bring a part-finished game into the office and ask our opinions on how it should be improved in the final version. They don't always take our advice, which is just as well. Who are we to dictate what games other people should play? All we can do is offer our opinions, and in the eyes of quite a few of our readers, we don't always get it right.

The next correspondent has a similar plan for software world domination . . .

LM

PURCHASE PROBLEMS

Dear Lloyd
Having seen a CRASH Smash called *Spellbound* by **MASTERTRONIC** in Issue 4 of your magazine, I have tried everywhere in the Newcastle Upon Tyne area, without success, to purchase it. (I have tried WH Smith, John Menzies, Boots and Computer Shop).

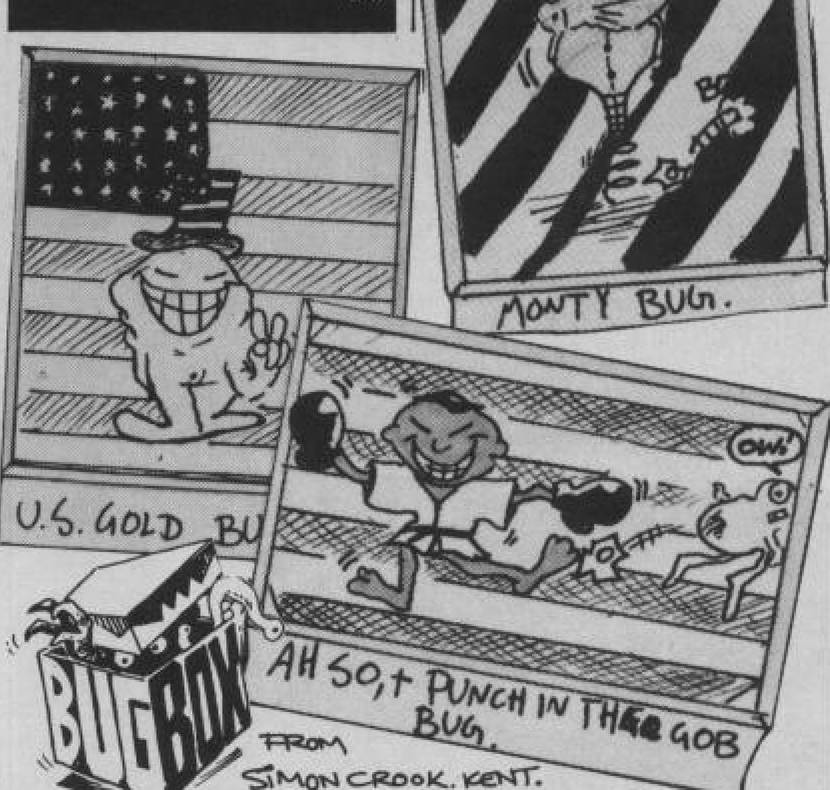
Could you please tell me which shop in this locality stocks this game?

David Cayzer, Winlaton, Tyne and Wear

Not being a Geordie lad, I'm afraid my knowledge of the retail outlets in your area isn't up to much David. All I can suggest is that you order the game from Auntie Aggie at CRASH Mail Order.

LM





CONTROLLING QUALITY

Dear Lloyd
While wandering around the shops I saw the Spectrum Plus 2 pack. It had a few free games with it, so in I went to examine these freebies. 'AMSTRAD Quality Control' they said. 'Obviously Amstrad are doing something about software quality', I thought to myself, 'preventing such crap as *Kung-Fu Master* – what a good idea!'

Now, wouldn't it be a good idea if a 'Software Quality Control' examination by certain magazines and computer companies was compulsory for all games so we don't get ripped off?

A 'PASSED QC' sticker or 'FAILED QC' sticker could be put on the cassette, so giving the purchaser a guide on what to buy. The game would still be fairly reviewed in magazines, but would be mentioned as 'passed' or 'failed' Quality Control. Even if it put the price of the game up a bit, we wouldn't get ripped off, and have to spend hours in the shop going 'Shall I, shan't I' . . . It would save a lot of bother (and money).

Also please tell me what has happened to the 'Journal of Mystical Affairs', as I haven't been receiving mine for some months now. I also feel I must agree with your view on **AMERICANA**'s Bullfighting Game, and I see no point in publishing such a game, as people are quite unlikely to buy it, unless they are quite tasteless, though I think it should still be reviewed (taking into consideration the topic of the game).

Continuing on the POKES debate, I think that if one of my games were hacked I could see where I had gone wrong with an 'impassable' bit, or made the game too hard, and change it next game, so POKEs can be a help to a game's programmer!

David Hosier, Oxford

The Amstrad quality control scheme isn't intended to act as a guide to the quality of the game, but indicates that the program will run on the full range of Spectrums without problems – a useful guideline for the would-be purchaser, given the compatibility problems that were experienced on the 128K front.

The JOURNAL has been taking a bit of a rest recently – I'm told that the energies surrounding the MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBERS have been channelled into other areas. The JOURNAL should be back with you soon . . .

LM

CRITICAL CONUNDRUM

Dear Lloyd
I am writing to you about two things. First: your new change of rating system. I think the idea is a good one; the Presentation rating instead of the Getting Started rating and Use of Computer ratings.

Last night when I was reading my February issue of CRASH which I had got that morning, my Mum said (she had been reading over my shoulder) 'Why do they have CRITICISM columns because Ben, Mike and Paul are not criticising the Products – they are commenting on them? So she suggested they were called Comments. But then you are left with the problem of renaming the COMMENTS column – I could not think of a suitable name. I'll leave that up to you!

Secondly, I think most games from comics or Films are good. So why does everyone keep complaining? If you like a product then go and buy it, if you don't then don't buy it. I never buy a game before it is reviewed, so I have no sympathy for people who do and find the game a bad one – it was their fault.

James Munson, Grazeley, Reading

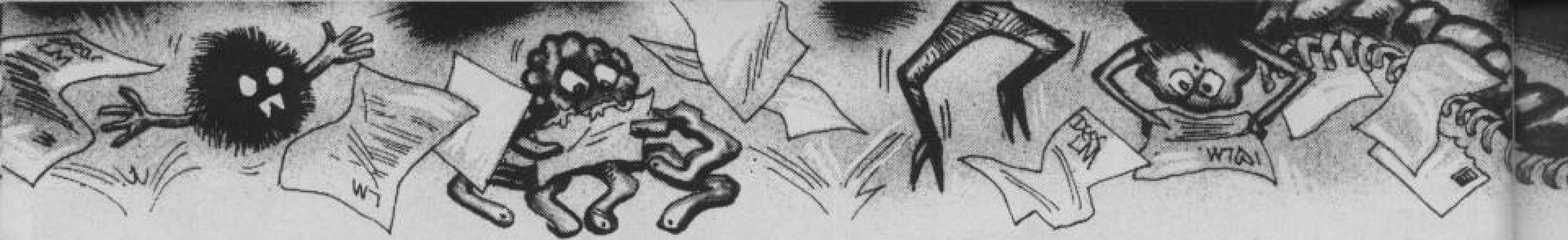
As my semantics teacher used to remind me Mrs Munson, a criticism need not be negative – it is a judgement rather than an indictment.

I think your approach to buying games is much simpler and a far better solution to the problem than forcing companies to submit their products to an assessing panel before they are released.

LM



SPECTRUM +2 AND 128
INTERNATIONAL MATCH DAY
BUMPER PACK OF 4
Yie Ar KUNG~FU +2
Konami
NOW FEATURING EUROPEAN COMPETITION
ON THE 128
Stars
MORE DEVILISH OPPONENTS
MUSIC AND ENHANCED GAME-PLAY
128K HIT GAMES
SPECIALLY WRITTEN FOR THE BIG MEMORY SPECTRUM PACKED WITH EXTRA ACTION MUSIC & FUN
Daley Thompson's SUPER-TEST 128
PISTOL SHOOTING
SPRING BOARD DIVING
TUG O' WAR
GIANT SLALOM
CYCLING
ROWING
PENALTIES
SKI JUMP
100m SPRINT
JAVELIN
TRIPLE JUMP
HURDLES
12 EVENTS
THE NEVERENDING STORY
© Neue Constantin Filmproduktion GmbH 1984.
Imagine
...the name of the game
£9.95
ocean



TWO-PART EPISTLE

Dear Crash
I think Alan Sugar has made a mess of the 128 Plus 2.

Don't get me wrong; it is definitely one of the best home computers on the market. I do, however, think there are many things which should have been incorporated. These are some of them.
(1) The joystick should have been made to be Kempston compatible or at least the user should have a choice of different types of joysticks by a switch or something.
(2) The 'Datacorder' should be similar to the standard of the one on the Amstrad. A counter should have been included. What about a disk drive specially for the 128/ Plus 2? It would be very useful.
(3) The sound chip should be allowed to run without stopping the computer from carrying out instructions.

Next, I totally disagree with your highly critical review of *Super Soccer*. Okay, it may be slightly slow, and there is a lot of colour clash, but look at what it offers to the user: a great variety of shots; slide tackles and fouls; speed control; energy bar; a variation of force for shots and for throw-ins; positioning of players; and ultimately, sendings off. Your reviewers must find it difficult to read and understand instructions. It took me a day to work out the rules after which, I beat the computer on Levels One and Two.

The availability of shots is incredible. Since when could you chip the ball over the defence at an angle of 80 degrees, and then collect the ball on *Match Day*? I mean, I've done that on *Super Soccer*, and I really enjoyed it!

I have a few gripes, however. I can't control the goalie very well. When the computer takes a penalty, it just kicks the ball straight at you, and you don't have to save it. Also, when you have won the tournament, there is no congratulation screen, and no tune; it just goes straight to the menu. My overall view of this game is that it is incredibly realistic, but far too easy!

People are right, CRASH reviewers are biased against sports simulations, especially football. Any comments, anyone?
Mik Stoddart, Guisborough, Cleveland

The next correspondents feel rather differently about Super Soccer *Mik. As to the Plus 2, nobody's design for a new computer is going to satisfy everyone, and the more complicated the features on offer, the higher the price. Compromise is the name of the game when you're launching a new product – unless it's a luxury yacht for millionaires . . .*

LM

GENEROUS, REF, GENEROUS

Dear Sir LM
Might I just say how generous you were in the review of *Super Soccer* by IMAGINE (who are I think a bit of an ENIGMA). Let me first say how I came about to buying the game. I was just sat down reading my local paper when I chanced upon seeing the local computer charts. There at No 4 is *Super Soccer* by IMAGINE. It was then that I remembered about seeing the advert and here comes the fatal mistake, reading about **John Ritman** and **Chris Clarke** doing a new football game. This is it! I thought. Hang on wasn't that to be like *Three and In*? I eventually kidded (no pun intended) myself into believing they had changed it into an improved *Match Day*. I bought it. Raced home, loaded it. Then on the screen appeared the 'written by **D J Anderson**' message. I began to play purely and simply because the graphics looked good. The sliding tackle is a joke. I think I got penalised every time. Goal-line incidents are impossible for the player to score or save because the ball disappears amongst the mess. The irony being I had a chance to pirate *Match Day* but refused on the grounds that the real Mccoy, Spock, Kirk or whatever was on its way. (Think about it!)

TIE-INS. Lets go back to the early days. All games were original and not many software houses were around. Rumours began 'Teenager earns £40,000 a year!' A-ha! Big business everyone thinks, here's a chance to make a quick bob or two. Money does not come in. Software Houses need something original, so the first Tie-in is born. What is this fool wittering on about? I hear you cry. The fact is the public creates the market: we fell for the tie-ins, software houses realised this. They then turned out puerile garbage knowing that because of the name, the game would sell. So software houses 'Where are the original games?'
'Mad Max', Manchester

That is, of course, the ultimate question concerning Tie-ins. If they're bad, then why do they sell so well? Maybe people really DO want games that bear a famous name, and software houses are only catering for the demand in the marketplace. Why should they go to all the trouble involved in creating a 'different' game, with all the attendant risks of being scorned for being too innovative, when they know perfectly well that a mediocre game that carries a famous name is likely to sell very well. Whose fault is it, if indeed there is 'fault' involved?

LM

XENOPHOBIA AND A FOUL UP . . .

Dear Lloyd
I have an apology to make. I am sorry for buying *Super Soccer* before reading CRASH's review but I was so looking forward to a follow up to *Match Day* that I just couldn't help myself. I thought that, considering IMAGINE's track record, the game would at least be playable! The animation is appallingly slow, the pitch has a weird perspective, the colour clash is horrific but even taking in these drawbacks, the game was quite enjoyable until I discovered the (main) bug . . .

If a foul is committed sometimes the injured party stays lying on the pitch indefinitely and very soon you can find that half of your team is 'dead'. This happens regularly now, and makes the game totally unplayable. It is quite obvious to me that IMAGINE rush-released this game for the Christmas market – it is unforgivable. This is the most bug-ridden and useless game since *Superbowl*.

Enough of that and on to the important part of my letter. I noticed in the December issue of CRASH on page 75, a competition to win a copy of *Handball Maradonna*. I noticed question three which asked 'Name the three goalkeepers in the World Cup Party in Mexico this year'. Easy I thought: Jim Leighton, Andy Goram and the legendary Alan Rough. Well, I didn't actually think that, I'm not that naive, but I object to the wording used. THE World Cup Party, to me and many others, was the Scotland Squad and one must not forget the Northern Ireland team either.

Also, in that issue there was a review of *The Great Escape* in which 'you play an English POW trying to escape . . .' Am I mistaken or didn't the rest of Britain also fight in World War II? Frankly, I think this is an insult to all Scottish, Welsh and Irish men who game up their lives to save not only their own countries but England as well.

Scotland gets a raw deal from all areas of the press and society and for CRASH to add fuel to this fire really annoys me.

England is not the centre of the Universe and CRASH is a British publication.
Chris Lafferty, Wishaw, Strathclyde

You're quite right of course, Chris. It's a clear case of thoughtless xenophobia on the part of the CRASH Team, and I have taken steps to reprimand those responsible. Rest assured that with a name like Graeme Kidd, our Editor has nothing against the Scots!

LM

UPGRADE BLUES

Dear Lloyd
How I wish I could buy a computer which was the best and it would not get updated. In Christmas of 1983 I bought my first computer, a Sinclair ZX81. At the time I thought it was the best computer going, until Christmas of 1986 when I updated my computer to a Spectrum 48K. I still have the machine and I never regretted buying it.

Now the Spectrum 128K and Plus 2 have come out. I would love to get one, but I can't afford one. All my mates smirk at me – they've got 128s and I go round their houses playing 128 games, and sob my heart out that I cannot hear that cool 3-channel music and extras that you don't get on the old Spectrum.

And I hear of more people updating to 128Ks, while I just have to play my old games and sulk. But I'm glad to say that CRASH still keeps up reviewing 48K games, and I never miss an issue. The Spectrum is one of the oldest and most popular computers going, so let's keep it up. Thank you Clive.
Robin Plummer, Harlow, Essex

You could always try entering the competitions we have planned for the April, May and June issues – we'll be giving away a Plus 2 and colour monitor every month!

LM

TOTAL AGREEMENT

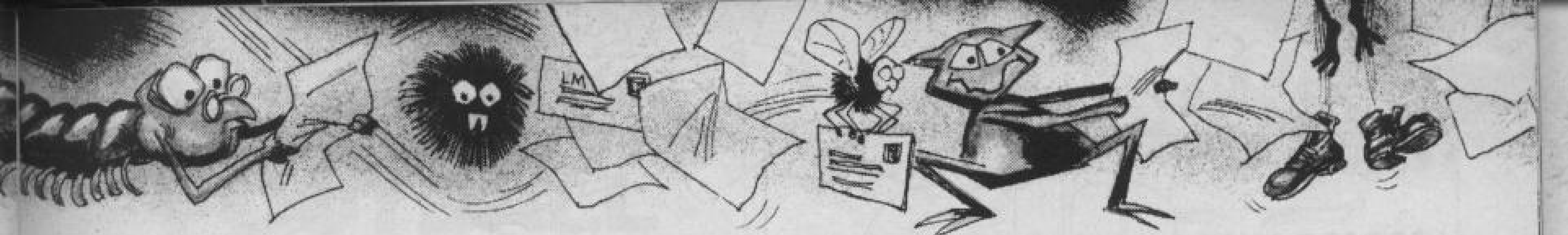
Dear Lloyd
Congratulations are in order. After years of people begging, pleading, praying, asking for reviewers to sign their comments, they are going to, at last! I was slightly amazed to see one of them was only 15 – the same age as me. His opinions are similar to mine on the games I've shelled out for. Strange they should all look like Miss Piggy though (sorry lads).

The ratings system itself has changed slightly as well – for the better in my opinion.

Next, onto **Mark Edwards**' letter about the *Space Harrier* review: I agree with you lot. The graphics get too messy as well – the bonus screen when you sit on the caterpillar as it batters things up is soooooo flickery. The game seems a lot clearer to see in black and white.
Paul Rylett, Littledale, Sheffield

What did you expect, Paul? Thirty year old reviewers? Glad you like the new ratings system – it seems to have been generally well-received (like Space Harrier*).*

LM



BUDGET BASHING?

Dear Lloyd
I feel compelled to write, and so write I must to tear apart the very fabric of the software industry as we know it. The danger must be brought to the attention of your readers for only your readers can repel it.

'What danger?' I hear you cry – well it is manifest in two ways:
1) Budget software. This is, if we admitted it , a mixture of boring dross and banal gamesplay dressed up (in some cases) by nice graphics. Let's face it, the only budget software that is played for more than one day is that which has formerly been released at full price like *Full Throttle*, *Kentilla* and so on.

On the rare occasions that I play budget software I must admit that I feel like I am merely going through the motions of playing a game , I'm not really enjoying it.

2. CRASH Smash awards. Now I'm not a person who attacks something just for the sake of it. I feel that CRASH as a whole has become just like the big companies it condemns for releasing games just because they look good. The CRASH Smash label is now being stuck on anything which looks pretty and plays reasonably well. If you were honest you would admit that your reviewers hardly play a game for more than two/three days. A game which looks good, plays well and is free to your reviewers has the danger of being made a CRASH Smash, but to a punter who pays £10 for a game the program must contain another quality, lastability. Games which I own which do not contain this are *Top Gun*, *Druid* (utter dross) and *Starglider* 128, which has been heralded as a great program but is, in reality, a normal game with things bolted on. I'm not saying all Smashes lack lastability (*Academy* is ace), just most.

So how can these dangers be eradicated? Simple, just don't buy budget games on looks alone – be more selective in your buying. As to the CRASH Smash problem, it's up to you Lloyd. Smashes should only be awarded to programs which have lastability and if this means holding a review back a month until the reviewers thoroughly play it, then this is your responsibility as a service to your readers.

Better a late review than readers casting aspersions on your ability to judge a game fairly.
Jeremy Connor, Battle Hill, Wallend, Tyne and Wear

I think you are being more than a little harsh about the quality of budget games. Some of them are very poor indeed, but the overall quality of original budget releases has been improving dramatically over the past twelve months or so.

It is the middle of February as I write this, and our reviewers are still playing Top Gun *and* Starglider. *Furthermore,* Starglider *has done very well in the Readers Awards. When it comes to Smashes, the reviewing team thinks particularly carefully about awarding ratings, and I feel that holding reviews over for a month or more would annoy more readers than it would please. Your opinions as to the lastability of a game must remain your opinions, and it seems that they differ from the opinions of our reviewing team.*

What do other readers have to say on the points raised in this letter?

LM

CONCEPT NOT EXECUTION

Dear Lloyd
I am replying to a letter from **Nick Drewett** in the Christmas Special, about age groups for competitions.

When you enter a competition in CRASH where you have to draw, surely it's the idea that counts not the artwork?
Michael Whitlock, Earls Barton, Northants

We do try to take account of age when judging 'arty' competitions, but the idea that lies behind an entry takes precedence over the execution. It's often the case that someone who can draw comes up with the best idea as well as the best execution, but not always.

LM

ALTERNATIVE CHART

Dear Lloyd
I have recently bought February's CRASH and read the letter concerning music by **Frank Bouts** (Mr/Mrs/Miss) and I disagree. I have a meagre 48K and here is my top 10:

1) Top Gun
2) BMX Simulator
3) Dynamite Dan (1)
4) Olli and Lissa
5) The Great Escape
6) Uridium
7) Quazatron
8) Biggles
9) Stainless Steel
10) Cauldron II

Matthew Rhodes, South Normanton, Derbyshire

NEAR MISSES

Dear Lloyd
How many times recently have you noticed reviewers saying of a game 'Not bad would have made a good budget offering.'?

And I think this is a very good idea.

Take for instance, the recent releases by OCEAN/IMAGINE. Granted, some of these games have been very good indeed, but a large amount have also been very average.

Now I can imagine their problem. A game idea perhaps with an expensive licence is given to a team of programmers, and they set to work on it. Later, back they come and show their game to the company. All is well if the game's great, but what if it isn't?

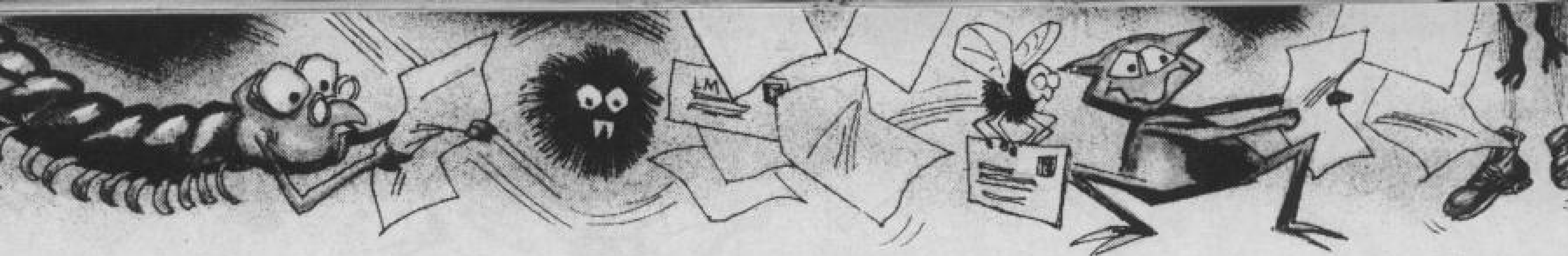
The company has several choices. Do they send the programmers back and tell them to do it again, possibly risking something like the *Street Hawk* fiasco? Do they release the game, risking their reputation if it is badly received? Or do they forget about it, losing perhaps thousands in development costs or licence deals?

But they could have another option. Release the game, but at a budget price. This would mean less profit from each game, but higher sales – and the protection of their image might make it worth their while.

There is another thing though. People know when it comes to buying budget games, it's mostly a hit-and-miss affair – you may get a great game, or a load or rubbish. People might think that all budget games released are bad if companies adopted my idea and released games that didn't come up to scratch at a budget price. This will all depend on how bad the near-misses are. I think this idea might work and it's certainly worth considering.
John McKinlay, Lochgelly, Fife

I think the financial commitments made by software houses to pay royalties to licence owners that are based on the 'full price' might cause problems, but the theory is an interesting one. Any software houses like to comment?

LM



ARCADE ANGST

Dear Lloyd
I feel that I must write to you about the topic of amusement arcades brought up by **Tom Evans** last issue.

I found his letter to be most insulting, and I feel that I must disagree with most of his views. First, he puts the honesty of arcade goers in question: 'You may wonder where they get all their money from. I'll leave it up to you to make your own conclusion to this . . . '. As a fairly frequent arcade goer, I am infuriated to be told that I come by my money by ill means. How can he say this? Sure there are some less savoury characters who may steal money to go down the arcade, but that percentage is so imponderable that it does not bear thinking about. He goes on to claim that if one is 'addicted' to arcade games then one will automatically become addicted to fruit machines. Honestly, how can one man make up so much crap? I count playing arcade games among my other hobbies. I do not, however, find fruit machines compelling whatsoever. To play fruit machines you have to be a mug or very rich indeed.

I think he is stupid to say that magazines should do everything against the so-called 'scourge' of arcades. The whole concept of games playing was born in the arcades. Without arcade games we might still be playing games like *Mined Out* and *Schizoids*, (a terrible thought, I trust you'll agree). I also disagree with his view that most arcade games make no contribution to the advances of games technology. Admittedly *Kung Fu Master* was rather poor but *Dragon's Lair*? This was the pioneer in video disk games. It was to break new ground in game technology.

He also goes on to say that most arcade conversions are poor: that is possibly true, but most of them fare not too badly in the transition from multi-megabyte machines with dedicated graphic chips and suchlike to the humble Spectrum.

How can Mr Evans say that reviews of good arcade conversions spur 'gamblers' and 'addicts'? If the conversion is good then the games player need not go to the arcade to play it. He need only sit down in front of his computer to seek enjoyment. And why does he call arcade game players gamblers? A gambler is someone who puts up a stake in a game of chance in hope of getting a greater return. There is no gambling aspect in a computer game. Gaming shows skill and judgement and does not have the prominent factor of luck.

I think that Mr Evans' whole argument was blatantly prejudiced, and I don't think that I will be the only irate person to complain. Anyway, if he is against game playing why does he read CRASH and others games mags?

You know, I often wonder if you write these letters Lloyd, knowing that it will cause a flood of replies in the next few issues to come. I think Mr Evans name will join the list of other tedious little men like Jeremy Conners and S Valente.

Yours angrily
Tom Kane, Viewpark, Glasgow

You weren't the only one to react angrily, Tom . . .

LM

THE ARCADE DEBATE . . .

Dear Lloyd
After reading Tom Evans' letter in CRASH last issue on the fact that arcades influence the young, I thought 'what a prat'! I mean, there are worse things on TV to 'influence the young' and in other sources. He also implies that so called 'arcade junkies' steal money or get it through other 'criminal' means. How can he say this: has he done a survey or something?

He then blames arcade conversions or certain computer magazines for the addiction to arcade games. Does he always speak such crap? He's like that man who said computer games led to violence Me and my mates just laughed. I didn't post my papers through windows because I played *Paperboy* or run through my village with a gun because I played *Commando*.

Computer games are for entertainment not as a way to learn 'how to be a criminal'.
S Counsell, Hedge End, Southampton

. . . CONTINUES

Dear Lloyd
In the area where I live there is hardly anything for teenagers to do. The local community centre closed down. So now the only place where teenagers can go is the local school. It has three squash courts, a sports hall, a gym and a swimming pool. It is very good but can't cater for over 3,000 youngsters – teenagers. There are no arcades either. The nearest arcade is 10 miles away in the City of Birmingham. I've only been once and found it very enjoyable.

'Arcade addiction should not be encouraged': obvious to even the thickest person, but Mr Evans writes 'hardly any arcade conversions are any good', he is writing utter nonsense. Take *Green Beret*, *Mikie*, *Ping Pong*, *Paperboy*, *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*, *Hypersports*, *Yie Ar Kung Fu* and *Gauntlet* to name but a few. So overall, my personal opinion is that arcades have little influence (if any) on the younger generation. Even they do, it is really up to the individual.
Ian Hamley, Great Barr Birmingham

Quite a resounding vote of 'No Confidence' in Mr Evans' beliefs it seems.

LM

REVIEWERS SLAMMED

Dear LM
After seeing the CRASH Christmas Special and reading the February issue I thought I had to write in to support Mark Edwards. I have played *Space Harrier* in the arcades and I rushed out to buy it as soon as I knew it was available on the Spectrum. Rushed Out. Got it. Rushed back. Loaded in. Played. Cor! Wow! Mega! Brill! It was Fab!

Then I saw the CRASH review.

Who the heck do the CRASH reviewers think they are? Fancy taking a brill game like that down. If I see any of them I'll . . .

Your absolutely disgustingly
James World, New Ash Green, Kent

and another, similar point of view . . .

UNFAIR TO ELITE!

Dear LM
I am writing to say that I have to agree with **Mark Edwards** (issue No 37) about your review of Space Harrier. This game is very good considering the limitation of the Spectrum and the complexity of the arcade machine, and **Keith Burkhill** has produced an excellent interpretation of the original.

Now, let's compare it to another game, say, *Lightforce*. I think you have to admit that really under all those wondrous graphics, *Lightforce* is really just another shoot 'em up. So how did it manage to get a Smash and *Space Harrier* not?
Terry Jones, Eastern Green, Coventry

There's obviously a fair amount of disagreement surrounding our review of Space Harrier*. Not everyone feels we under-rated the game, but the majority of the letters I have received this month would indicate that our reviewers were rather harsh. They stand by their ratings, though . . .*

LM

BULLFIGHTING DEBATE CONTINUES

Dear Elliot Owens
I, too, live in Kidderminster and I would quite like to meet you, to discuss the morality of bullfighting. Please think about how the slaughter of a living creature can possibly be entertainment – 'sport' it may be, but only to those of us with sick minds and who are obviously so self-centred that they think dumb animals cannot feel pain.

I personally feel C&VG have, for once, done the right thing – a game like this is in very bad taste, and should be discouraged. Have you ever seen a bullfight? I did, once, and let me dispel any notion that you may have of an equal contest. The bull is cajoled, humiliated, and ultimately murdered. Give AMERICANA a break? Or perhaps I misread your letter.

For Heaven's sake, Elliot, think before you write next time – please don't compare 'poor defenceless aliens' in the trivial world of video game to real, live animals in real life.
Glyn Evans (a dweller of the real world), Kidderminster

And with that final contribution, I declare the Ole Toro debate closed.

LM

128 PERSPECTIVE NEEDED

Dear Lloyd
Thank you very much for printing my letter in Issue 37 (February) and especially for making it the 'Star Letter'.

However, I am known around here as Stephen Click not Stephen Cluck! – presumably a typing error (combined with my handwriting).

I think you have done a good revision job on the review ratings, they have been made more relevant, but what about having a small 128K comment – for instance, is the sound any different, are there more levels?

Incidentally, well done with **LM**: it is well written and informative, but could you re-arrange the contents page as in the free black issue with regulars, features etc?

Long live Lunar Jetman!
Stephen Click, Nunthorpe, Middlesborough

Hmm. We might just take you up on the idea of a 128K panel piece with reviews.

Ah well, gardening assistant or no gardening assistant, by the time I settle down to compiling the FORUM for the next issue of CRASH, the seeds I have planted in the propagator should be ready for pricking out. I think the galley proofs for the latest edition of my Long Word Dictionary will have to take second place to the demands of horticulture for a while longer . . .

The arrival of new life in the garden is a pleasing thing – as is the arrival of new life in your letters. Keep your opinions flowing, mailing all missives to the usual address: LLOYD MANGRAM'S FORUM, CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB

ENSURE YOUR REGULAR COPY OF CRASH

When a magazine is rising in circulation as rapidly as CRASH is doing it tends to sell out immediately and you may experience difficulty in obtaining your copy every month. So the best thing to do is place a regular order with your local newsagent, which you can do by handing him this form.

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by Rosetta McLeod



ELECTRONIC ENTERPRISE

A new company, WESTEX ELECTRONICS, have released a most inventive product designed to teach basic electronics to primary school children. The interesting thing about WESTEX is that it was set up by three teenagers, Andrew Marsh, Barry Hindmarch and Andrew Hawkins, as a result of the boys winning the Whitbread Business Challenge. This competition aimed to find the best business idea in the country, and was only open to those under the age of nineteen. Having won the competition and obtained some financing from a bank, a company was created to market the product – an aid to teaching the fundamentals of electricity and electronics.

The kit which they are now marketing consists of a printed circuit board, associated worksheets and companion computer programs. Two teachers are also involved in the venture, and have lent their expertise to the preparation of the excellent worksheets.

WESTEX began trading in November 1985, and a few months ago were able to move into their own premises and take on their first employee. In the contacts I have had with the company, I have been very impressed with the professionalism of the whole venture. Barry, who is at present studying for his A levels, and the two Andrews who are both employed in a local electronics firm, give only a part-time commitment to their company, but already their future looks promising. With the introduction of the new GCSE syllabus, five or six new products are in the pipeline, starting with a kit for teaching physics to pupils in the early stages of secondary school. CRASH COURSE will keep you informed of these new developments. In the meantime, if you were thinking of buying your child a chemistry or physics set, think again, and send off to WESTEX for their electronics kit. The company is based in Peel House, Skelmersdale, WN8 9PT.

ELECTRONICS KIT

Producer: **Westex Electronics**
Retail Price: **£16.95 for kit, £2.99 each program**
Age Range: **7–11**

PROGRAM ONE

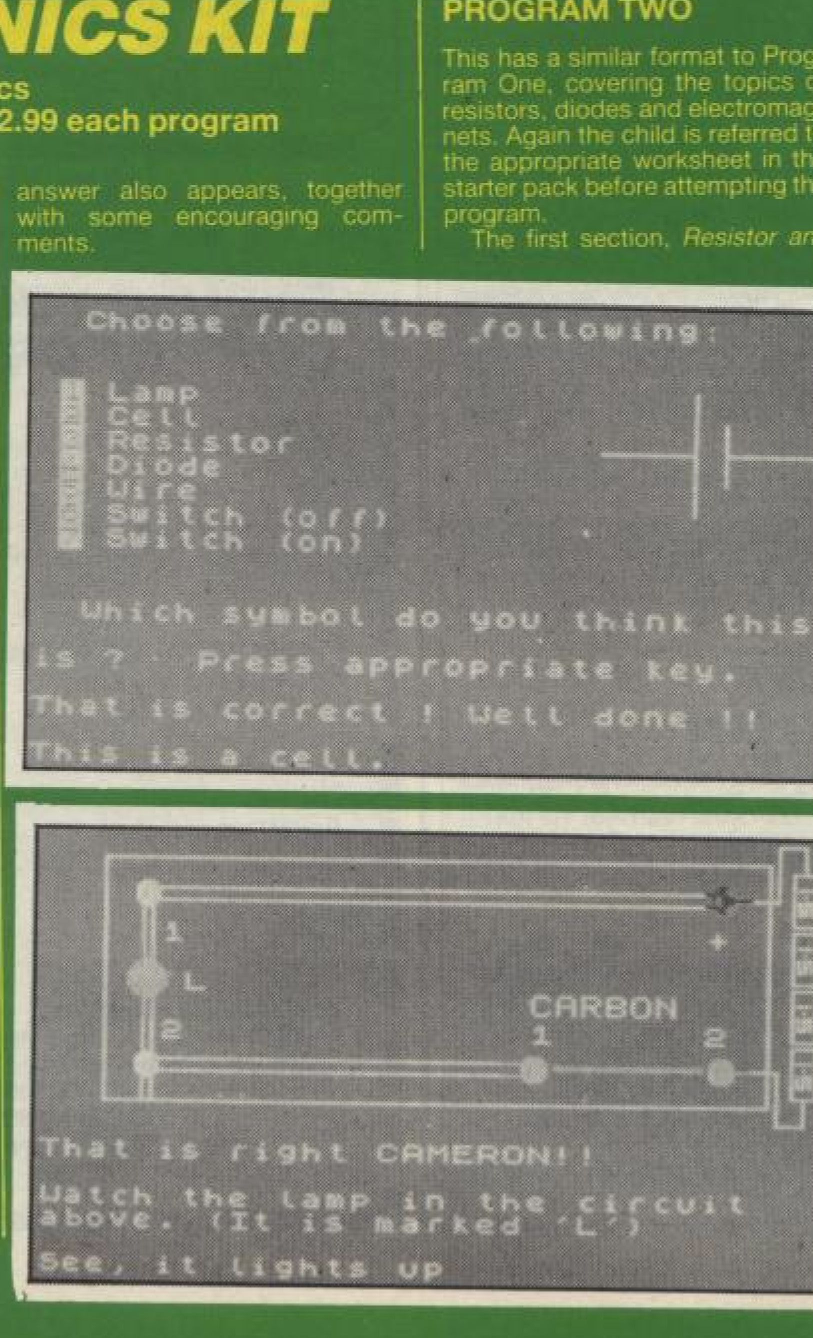
This program covers the topics of conductors and insulators, bulbs in series and parallel, and simple switching. It should be used after experiments with the circuit board have been completed. The program is introduced by a character called Electroman (as are the worksheets), and a nice variety of tunes make the program appeal to the user.

The first section tests the child's knowledge of whether a material is a conductor or an insulator. Ten materials are offered – copper, steel, carbon, glass, wood, rubber, card, plastic, brass and aluminium. After the answer has been given, the screen graphics of a circuit board demonstrate whether or not each material conducts electricity.

Before attempting Section Two, *Switches*, the pupil is reminded to try worksheet Number Five first. Again, a clear diagram appears on the screen, with a simple description of how a switch can break a circuit and thus turn the current on and off.

This then leads the pupil on to the part of the program which tests knowledge of series and parallel circuits. For each of the circuits shown on the screen, the child has to decide if the lamps will be out, dim, or normal, or if they are arranged in series or parallel. A brief explanation of the correct answer also appears, together with some encouraging comments.





PROGRAM TWO

This has a similar format to Program One, covering the topics of resistors, diodes and electromagnets. Again the child is referred to the appropriate worksheet in the starter pack before attempting the program.

The first section, *Resistor and Diode*, shows how these components affect the way a circuit operates. By means of graphics and simple explanatory text, the computer describes the function of resistors and diodes and this method is continued in the next part of the program – *Making Electromagnets*.

The final section tests the user on the simple circuit symbols already covered in the worksheets. A symbol is shown on the screen and the correct meaning has to be chosen from a list of seven.

Working through the kit as a whole, the child will develop a variety of skills: reading and carrying out instructions, interpreting and wiring a simple circuit diagram, accurately recording information, correctly deducing the outcome, designing his or her own experiment, and drawing a simple circuit. WESTEX have also produced an audio cassette for use with children experiencing reading difficulties. In addition, they will also supply replacement parts – lamps, wires, leads and so on.

COMMENTS

Control keys: clearly explained on the screen
Keyboard play: good
Graphics: effective and relevant
Use of colour: limited
General rating: the package has been carefully thought out, and is based on sound educational practice with the computer programs making an effective contribution to the whole.



STAR SEEKER

Producer: **Mirrorsoft**
Retail price: **£9.95**
Age range: **older children/adults**

If you've ever been to the London Planetarium, you might have been tempted to find out more about the night sky. *Star Seeker* attempts to bring the Planetarium into your own living room! The package actually contains two programs, *Star Seeker* and *Solar System*.

The first of these is a program which gives views of the night sky from any point on the earth's surface, at any time from 1800 to 2200hrs. It holds information on 500 stars in 76 different constellations, including all the most prominent ones, and may be used as an interesting introduction to astronomy, enabling the novice to learn about the stars visible in the night sky. It may also be of use to the amateur astronomer as a reference guide and practical tool.

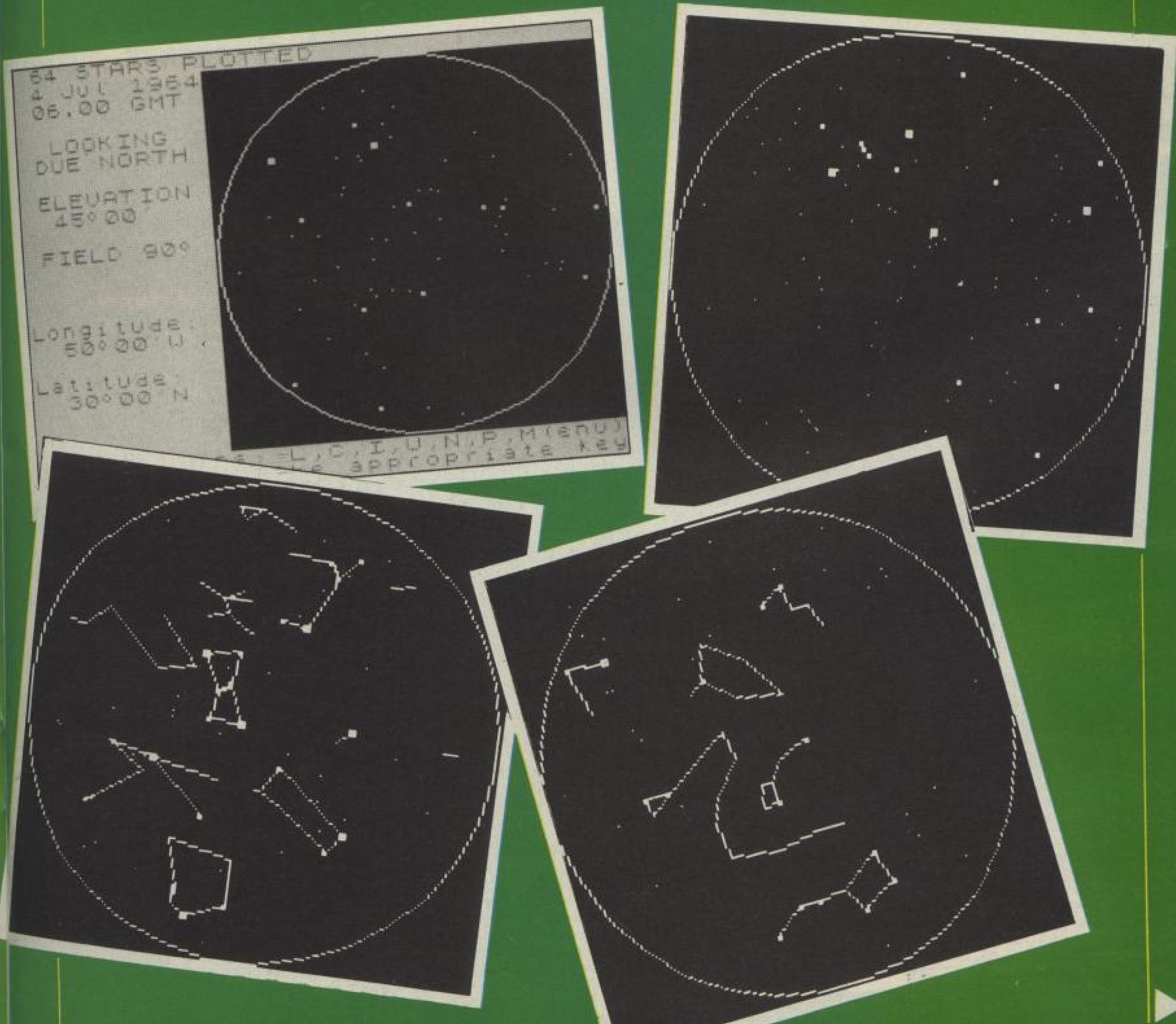
To begin, the user is asked to input certain information. First of all, the location on Earth from which the night sky is to be 'viewed' must be provided. This must be specified by the longitude and latitude in degrees, and for convenience, a table in the accompanying booklet gives the exact position of selected cities. Next, the program asks for the direction in which you want to view the sky – North, South, East, West or overhead, though you can also position the centre of your field of vision towards any direction in the sky and alter the size of the field of view displayed.

Once you have provided this information, the program begins to plot the requested star map and displays it on the screen. A menu then allows a variety of options. The computer can list the names of the different constellations, with the stars in each flashing briefly when the name is given. It is also possible for a constellation map to be drawn, defining the shape of that constellation and making it easier for the user to learn to recognise the individual star groupings. You can also obtain quite detailed information on any of the plotted stars, and even obtain a printout of the star map.

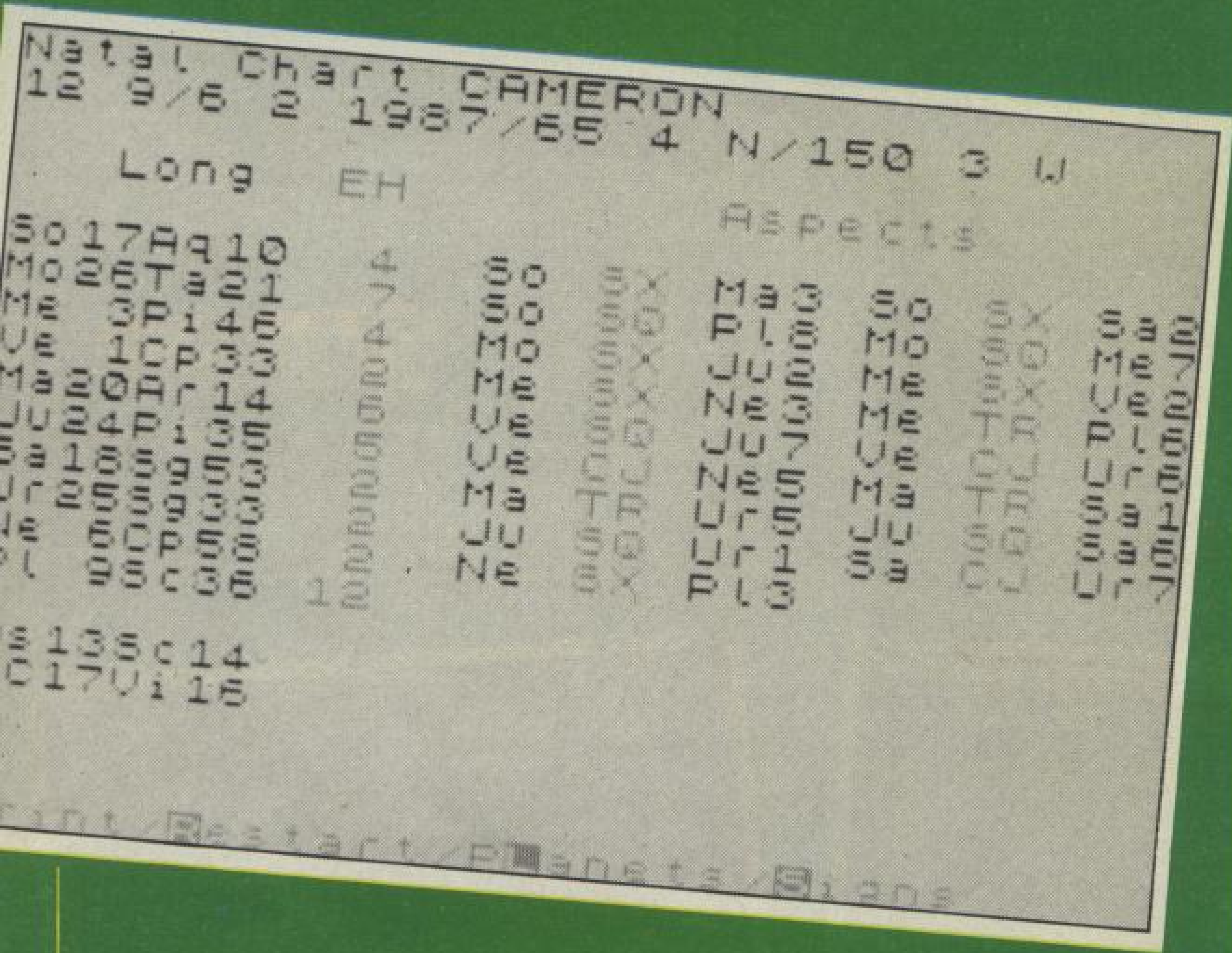
The second program, *Solar System*, provides information on the Sun, Moon, planets and Halley's comet. This program locates planets in the sky and can plot their orbits relative to the sun and each other, and can plot the course of Halley's comet (which has recently been in view for the first time since 1910). One of the options allows you to watch the motions of the planets and the comet as they orbit the sun, and a great amount of factual information is also obtainable. A very detailed booklet describes the operation of the programs, as well as giving a wealth of additional astronomical information.

COMMENTS

Control keys: mostly single key commands
Keyboard play: responsive
Graphics: clear and appropriate
Use of colour: limited
General rating: all you ever wanted to know about the night sky







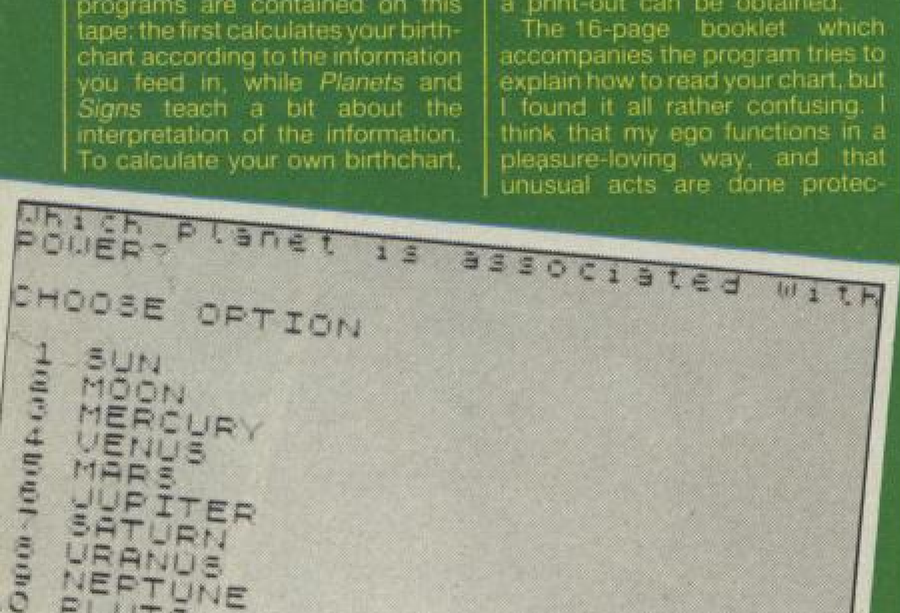
ASTROTUTOR

Producer: **Astrocalc**
Retail price: **£11.50**
Age range: **adult**

Do you read your horoscope in the paper every day? Have you ever wondered how astrologists work out their calculations? Well, here's your chance to learn! Three short programs are contained on this tape: the first calculates your birthchart according to the information you feed in, while *Planets* and *Signs* teach a bit about the interpretation of the information. To calculate your own birthchart, you need to know not on. your date of birth, but also the exact time in hours and minutes, and the latitude and longitude of your birthplace – look it up in an atlas! Having entered all this information according to the screen prompts, you sit back while the computer does the calculations. These are then displayed on the screen, and a print-out can be obtained.

The 16-page booklet which accompanies the program tries to explain how to read your chart, but I found it all rather confusing. I think that my ego functions in a pleasure-loving way, and that unusual acts are done protectively, but what does it all mean in simple language? The booklet does give a warning that a great deal of experience is required before correct word-portraits can be achieved, and that this program gives you just a taster.

The programs on *Planets* and *Signs* teach you that each planet stands for a psychological principle or related group of principles (the Sun, for instance, represents power and vitality), while each sign stands for a mode of expression, a way of doing things. Having learned the basics, you can then test your memory and obtain a final score. If you want to continue your study of astrology, the booklet recommends a couple of good books and gives the address of the Astrological Association. Or, of course, you can buy some more of ASTROCALC's programs – contact them at 67 Peascroft Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts.



COMMENTS

Control keys: mainly single letter commands
Keyboard play: good
Graphics: none
Use of colour: limited
General rating: rather unsophisticated in terms of screen display and booklet presentation, but a good introduction to the subject

PHINEAS FROGG

Producer: **Mirrorsoft**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Age range: **7–12**

Here's a program that is definitely going on my shopping list! It may be aimed at children from 7 to 12, but I haven't cracked it yet – though I've been having great fun trying!

Phineas Frogg is an adventure game with quite superb animated graphics. Taking the role of Phineas Frogg special agent, the player has to rescue Professor Mole from the clutches of the evil Hamsterchief, who is holding Mole captive in SLOTH – the Secret Lair of the Terrible Hamsters. The accompanying booklet contains a lovely story setting the background for the adventure – I don't know who wrote it, but it is quite wonderful! Phineas Frogg turns out to be a hero who is a cross between Toad of Toad Hall and James Bond, and the humour really has you laughing out loud!

Having read the story, you are ready to play the game. An envelope marked TOP SECRET is contained in the package, but this is to be opened only in an emergency (Okay, I admit it. I opened the envelope). The game is actually quite difficult, and if you miss a clue or make a silly mistake, you will have to start again. It is possible to SAVE your position, and instructions for this are given on the back of the inlay card.

There are five different puzzles to be solved in the search for Mole, and as little help is given in the instructions for these, the player has to work out the rules by trial and error. An added difficulty is that if you are making rapid progress, the game gets harder! Conversely, if you are not doing too well, the problems get a bit easier. If you do finally manage to rescue Mole, a Spy Rating is awarded.

The children who tested the game for me were completely enthralled by it – indeed, they would hardly let me have a go at all . . . Go out and buy *Phineas Frogg* now!

COMMENTS

Control keys: kept as simple as possible
Keyboard play: very responsive
Graphics: excellent. the game is worth buying for the animated graphics alone!
Use of colour: eye-catching
General rating: a program not to be missed. Funny, visually pleasing, challenging – this game has all the qualities to appeal to children of all ages! Let's have some more Phineas Frogg adventures!



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FanZi

Hannah Smith takes another break from writing for magazines, and spends a while writing about them . . . in this, our third look at Fanzines.

Believe it or not, it's almost a year since the last Fanzine feature appeared! A follow-up was inevitable – we just didn't expect to leave it this long. However, this procrastination has nothing to do with a lack of material – ever since last May, Fanzines have been steadily arriving at CRASH Towers. We read them, and read them again, before entering them under F in the congested CRASH filing cabinet . . . but nothing happened. Until now.

The cleaning lady has been moaning that bits of paper are all over the office floor, and seeing as the filing cabinet is about to burst, The Powers That Be decreed that the Fanzine File be opened once more and its contents exhumed. Seven Fanzines were investigated last May. Have they stood the test of time? Or have they gone to that great newsagents in the sky?

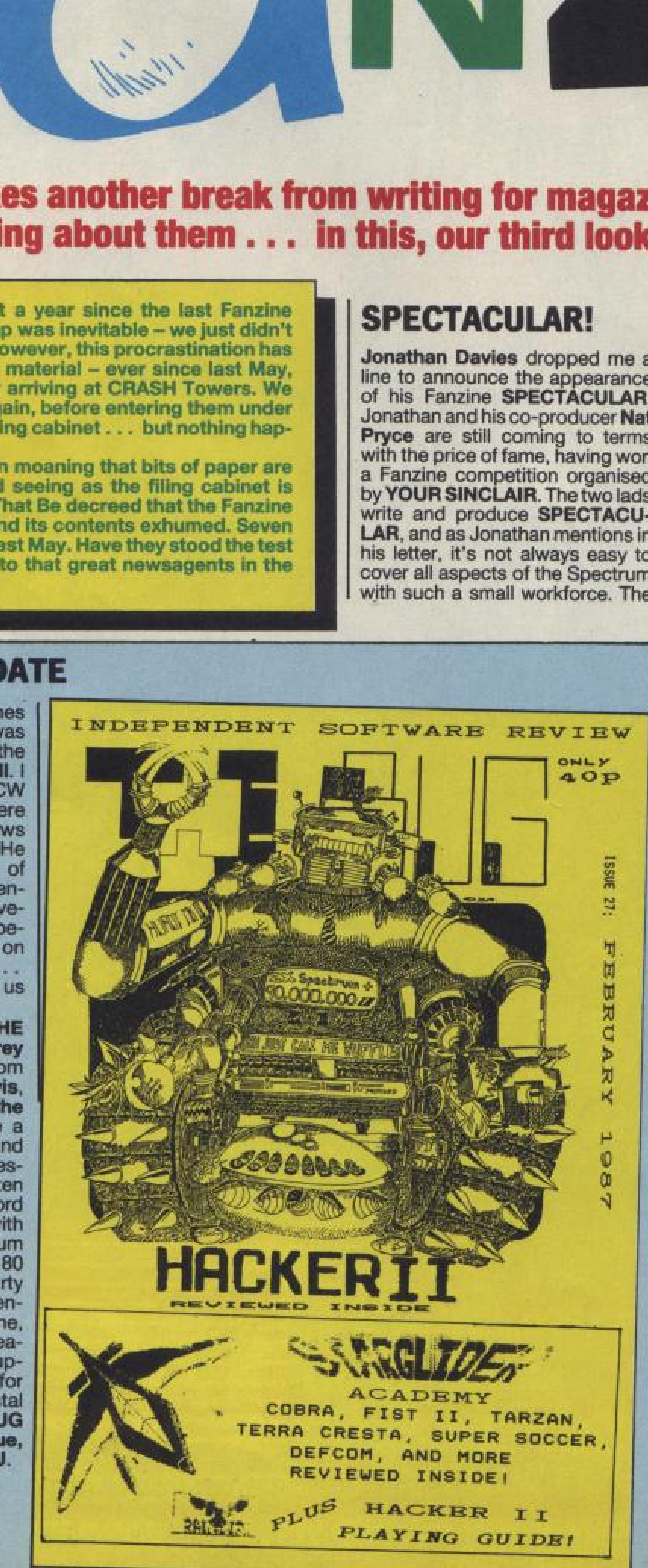
SPECTACULAR!

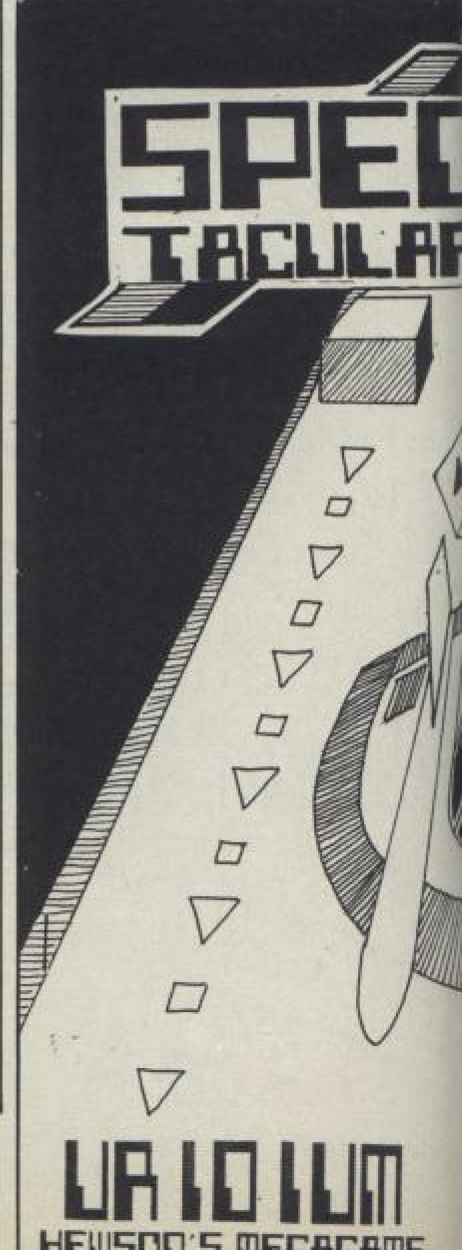
Jonathan Davies dropped me a line to announce the appearance of his Fanzine **SPECTACULAR**. Jonathan and his co-producer **Nat Pryce** are still coming to terms with the price of fame, having won a Fanzine competition organised by **YOUR SINCLAIR**. The two lads write and produce **SPECTACULAR**, and as Jonathan mentions in his letter, it's not always easy to cover all aspects of the Spectrum with such a small workforce. The magazine is written on the Amstrad CPC464, illustrated with screen dumps of games (provided by an Alphacom printer), and published using a full size printer which some kind soul has loaned to Jonathan and Nat. **SPECTACULAR** comes out every two months and can be obtained by sending a cheque or postal order for 35p, along with an 18p stamp, to **SPECTACULAR, 28 Claremont Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8DH.** A subscription for six issues costs a mere three pounds.

PUBLISHERS' UPDATE

One of the homegrown magazines featured in the last round-up was **INTERFACE**, produced under the watchful eye of **Lucian Randall**. I bumped in to Lucian at the PCW Show back in September, where he imparted to me the sad news that **INTERFACE** is no more. He has forsaken the rigours of magazine production to concentrate on his scholastic achievements – and very wise too! Hopefully **INTERFACE** will be back on the market after the O Levels . . . no doubt Lucian will keep us informed of the situation.

Still going strong though, is **THE BUG** – primarily run by **Jeffrey Davy**, with considerable help from **Jaron Lewis**, **Kelsey Lewis**, **Danny Marcus** and **Percy the Potato**! **THE BUG** has come a long way since its early days, and is now one of the most professional Fanzines available. Written on the Amstrad PCW8256 word processor, and embellished with screen dumps from Spectrum games, **THE BUG** now boasts 80 pages, crammed with over thirty pages of game reviews, an adventure section, a strategy help-line, stories, competitions and features, and an interesting and up-to-date news section! And all for 40p! Send a cheque or postal order for 40p to **THE BUG MAGAZINE, 28 Leaside Avenue, Muswell Hill, London N10 3BU**.

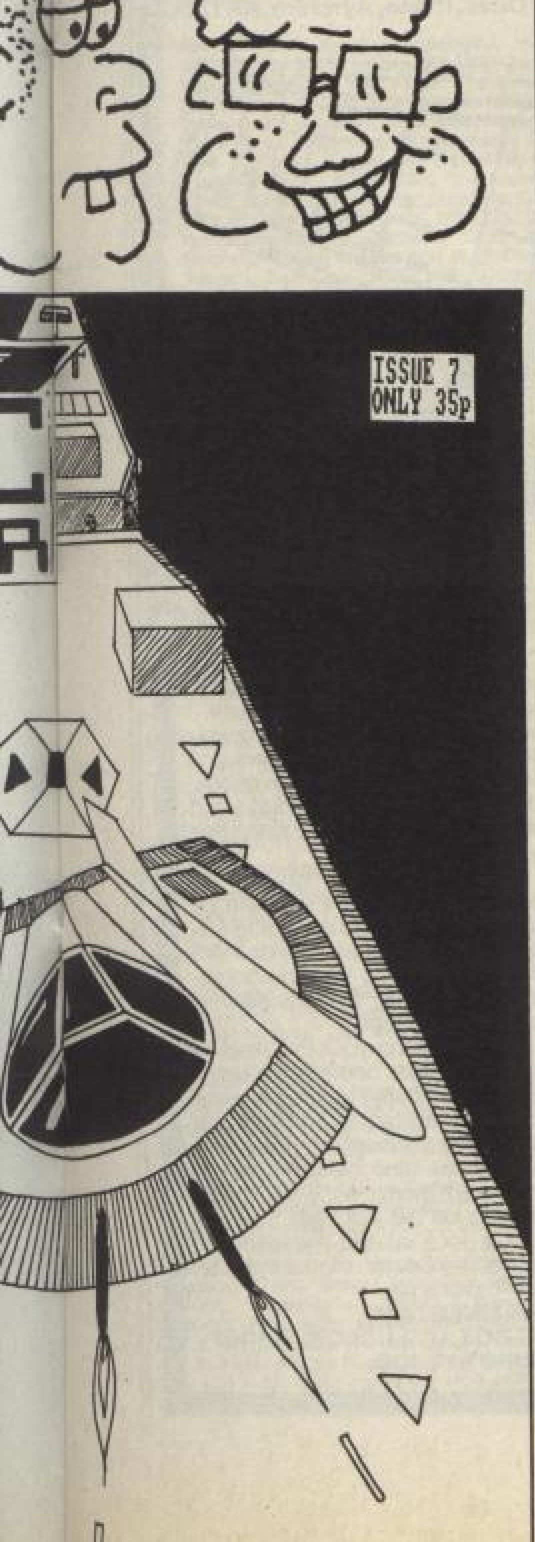

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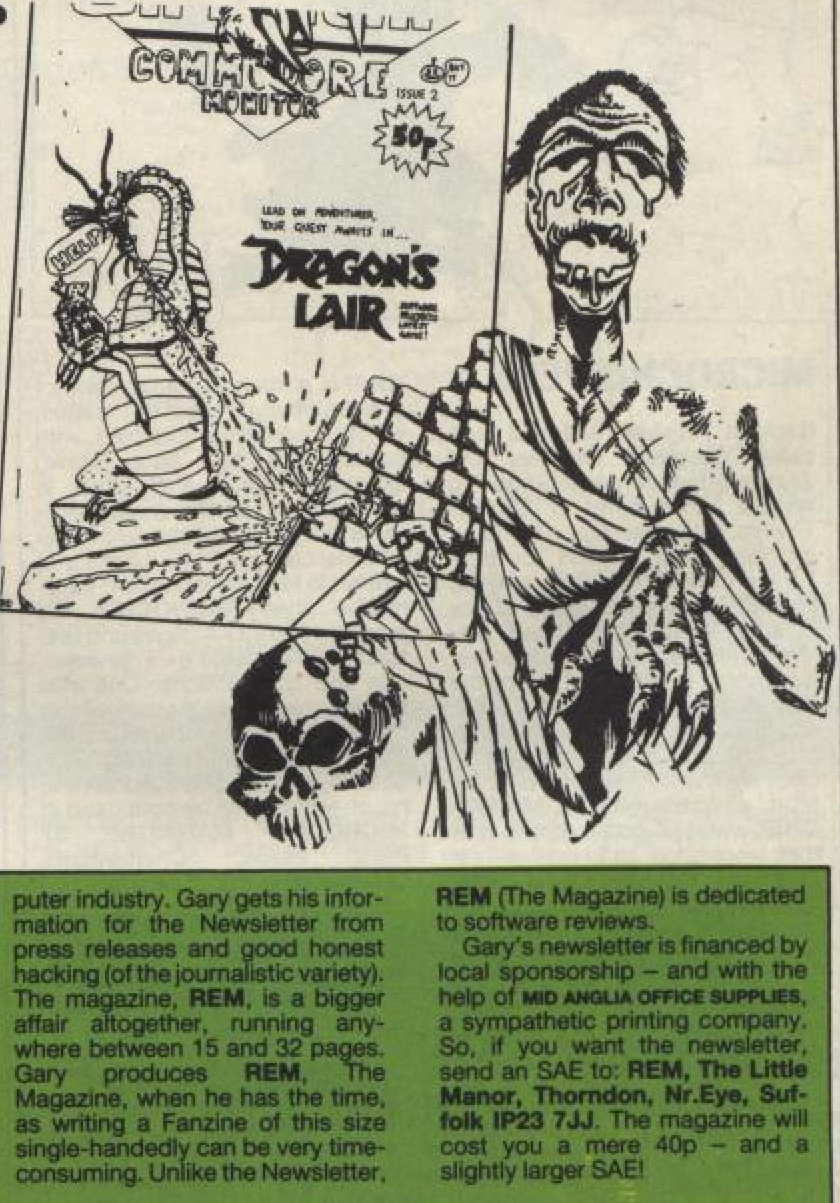
NE FiLe





MONITORING GAMES

Huw Lippiatt is sole editor of **SINCLAIR and COMMODORE MONITOR.** Up until now the Fanzine has been hand written, but in future it will be typed and photocopied for a more professional feel. **SCM** runs to around 12 pages which are literally crammed with reviews, photocopied screen shots, letters, tips (written by a certain Robin Andy!?) and gentle banter between Huw and his compatriot, Jad. The writers of **SINCLAIR and COMMODORE MONITOR** have found a useful way to convince software houses that they are genuine: every game sent to them is auctioned after it has been reviewed and the proceeds are sent to the NSPCC. **SCM** is selling well, with stocks being exhausted within half a day of the magazine going on sale. Readers wanting to find out for themselves about **SCM** should send 50p and an SAE to **SINCLAIR and COMMODORE MONITOR Head Office, Glemholm, Albion Terrace, Saltburn-by-the-Sea, Cleveland, TS12 1LT.**



REM and REM

Another up-and-coming publisher is **Gary Doyle** – virtually single-handedly he produces **REM** which is both a magazine and newsletter. The Newsletter appears bimonthly, and consists of an A4-size sheet printed on both sides with current news about the computer industry. Gary gets his information for the Newsletter from press releases and good honest hacking (of the journalistic variety). The magazine, **REM**, is a bigger affair altogether, running anywhere between 15 and 32 pages. Gary produces **REM**, The Magazine, when he has the time, as writing a Fanzine of this size single-handedly can be very time-consuming. Unlike the Newsletter, **REM** (The Magazine) is dedicated to software reviews.

Gary's newsletter is financed by local sponsorship – and with the help of **MID ANGLIA OFFICE SUPPLIES**, a sympathetic printing company. So, if you want the newsletter, send an SAE to: **REM, The Little Manor, Thorndon, Nr.Eye, Suffolk IP23 7JJ.** The magazine will cost you a mere 40p – and a slightly larger SAE!

REM

FANZINE FILE



MICROCHIPPERS

Back in August 1986 two lads called **Stephen Thomas** and **James Kinnear** came knocking on our door here in CRASH Towers. They had come to do an interview with CRASH for their Fanzine **MICROCHIP**. I rang up Stephen a while back to check whether **MICROCHIP** had survived the ravages of time since last summer – I thought that seeing the total chaos in the CRASH office would put them off journalism for good! Although Stephen wasn't back from school when I rang, his Mum assured me that **MICROCHIP** was still going strong and they were about to bring out their next issue any day now. **MICROCHIP** is a strange combination of professionally typeset pages, which are then photocopied, with photographs and hand drawn sketches. The overall effect is quite fetching. But the most impressive feature is the standard of the editorial content, the publication is written in an interesting and informative style. **MICROCHIP** fills around 10 to 12 A4 pages and features reviews, features, interviews, tips and competitions. One nice touch is that half of the profits from the Fanzine are donated to the Save the Children Fund. **MICROCHIP** costs 25p, and Stephen and his co-writers can be contacted at **MICROCHIP MAGAZINE, 37 Park Place, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL50 2RE**.

REFLEX ACTION

REFLEX started out in October 1986 and is the only Fanzine (to my knowledge) to come from Scotland. **Ewan Dalton** and **Phil Graham** share the responsibility of Editorship, but they get a bit of help from Art Director **Graham Delargy** and contributing writers **Colin Failes** and **Fraser Cheyne**. **REFLEX** started out as a small A5-size publication, but as sales improved its size increased to A4, and it now runs to about eight pages. One of the main attractions of this Fanzine is its compact nature – it doesn't look cluttered, and gives the impression that a lot of thought has gone into the presentation. Reviews are printed on separate pages, and surprisingly there is no wasted space at all. The original artwork is produced using an Alphacom printer, and the pages are then enlarged using a photocopier. Screen dumps of games are used to break up the text, which gives the magazine a more original and professional look than photocopies of screen shots which have been 'borrowed' from existing computer mags.

Ewan mentioned to me that a forthcoming feature in **REFLEX** will be 'Teach Yourself Machine Code', which he is in the process of writing at this very moment. This will be serialised in **REFLEX** over the coming months. As with many Fanzine producers, Ewan and Phil are still in full-time education, so they'll probably have to take a break in the summer to take their Highers (the Scottish equivalent of A Levels). **REFLEX** arrives through your letterbox after you send a cheque of postal order for 30p and an SAE to **SPECTRE ENTERPRISES, REFLEX, 21 Berry Drive, Irvine, Ayrshire, KA12 0LJ.**



UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

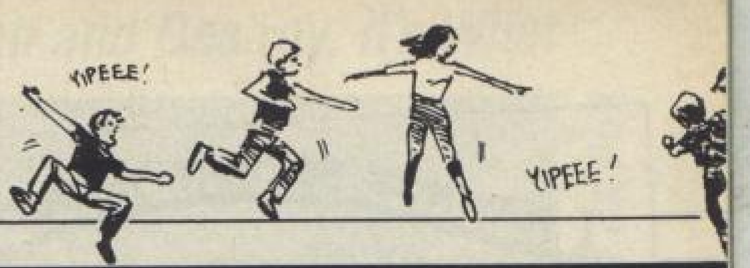
Kings Norton in Birmingham is the base of **SPOTLIGHT PUBLICATIONS**. And by the time you get to read this, **JOURNAL**, their brand new gaming magazine, will be on the streets and very much available. **Perry Stephen Buck** is the fourteen year-old overseer of this brand new enterprise, and stresses that everything from writing to production, administration and layout will be handled by his good self. **JOURNAL** not only features reviews of all the latest Spectrum software, but is also to include such sections as a regular Play By Mail column, Role Playing Games, film reviews, and book critiques. And with the marriage of computer and board games getting more prolific, **JOURNAL** will also include reviews of the latest sit-down family games such as *Trivial Pursuit*. **JOURNAL** should run to about 30 A4 pages. **SPOTLIGHT GAMES** (who you may recall got a mention in the CRASH Christmas Special Play By Mail Column) are a division of **SPOTLIGHT PUBLICATIONS**. If you'd like to see what **JOURNAL** has to offer, then send an SAE to **JOURNAL, 19 Hawkesley End, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B38 9SQ**. At the moment there is some indecision about the price of **JOURNAL** as **Perry Stephen Buck** is still shopping around to find the cheapest printer. The coverprice will be either 50p or 75p – so a brief letter of enquiry to Stephen before you send for the mag would be a good idea, as I guess he'll have got things sorted out by the time you read this.

When we last ran a feature on Fanzines, it seemed that one of the biggest problems faced by the home-based publishers was getting companies to take them seriously. This still seems to be a problem, as software companies are wary of people posing as Fanzine editors just so they can get free games. **Julia Coombes**, PR person for **Hewson**, has a standard tactic for dealing with the piles of letters she receives from Fanzines. Julia generally ignores the first letter, working on the basis that if the magazines actually exist and are keen enough, they'll persevere with trying to obtain software. A good tip is never to rely on just a letter, most software companies won't respond unless you actually send them a copy of your Fanzine to prove you exist. And if you send a couple of consecutive issues, then you credibility rating is bound to increase.

Right that's it. I'm sorry if your Fanzine hasn't been given a mention, but once again I've got more material than space. A lot of mags had to be left out because I couldn't contact the editors (ex-directory telephone numbers and so on), so if you are on the phone, staple a note of your address and phone number to your magazine when you send it in.

Considering that virtually all these Fanzines are written by people who are still attending full-time education, and work on them is usually slotted into the homework schedule, the standard is exceptionally high.

Keep sending your Fanzines to us – and each one is thoroughly read before being put safely away for future reference. Fanzines are taken very seriously by those that write them (and people like us, who read them), so if you don't want to be left out next time we take a look at the Independent Publishing Sector, then send your publications to:
**FANZINES DEPT,
PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.**



WINNERS & PRIZES

Ooch, Ouch! My fingers are horribly sore after opening a monster dose of Christmas competition entries, working out who deserves to win and typing their names into the Competition Computer. I hope you're all suitably grateful – I had to miss quite a few of my favourite telly programs as I worked into the night, sorting out your entries.

I don't suppose you have any more sympathy for me than the Spiky-Haired Ones on ZZAP!, so I might just as well get straight on with the results . . .

LA BELLE FRANCE

Penny Gibson will be travelling from her home town, Bristol, flying from London to Charles DeGaulle airport in Paris. You see, **INFOGRAMES** are treating her and a friend to a weekend in Paris. Well done, Penny. Everyone else who entered this comp collects a money off voucher redeemable against **INFOGRAMES** games.

YOUTH CLUB

Stephen Grant from Sussex BN1 6LR will shortly be receiving a Sony Walkman and a copy of *Firelord*. Why? Cos he provided the most humorous entry, in my humble opinion, for the **HEWSONS** Christmas competition. Five second prizes of a copy of *Firelord* and a cassette rack go to: C Emblem, Barnsley, S71 4RB; Mark Oldham, Manchester, M24 3WW; Christopher J Wright, Merseyside, L63 9HJ; Judy Falkner, East Sussex, TN6 1TN; Sean Cooney, Roscommon, Ireland.

And 25 runners up each receive a copy of *Firelord* plus a poster . . .

Martin Ward, North Humberside, HU10 6AH; Wayne Birch, Lincs, LN7 6NP; James Earl, Middlesex, HA2 9JE; Frederik K Twynstra, 8g33DA Leuwarden, Netherlands; David Shotbott, Dunstable, Bedfordshire; Scott Marjoribanks, Scotland, FK1 4JH; J Wiacek, Fareham, PO16 8DN; Lee Prutton, Beds, SG15 6SB; Ian Sumter, Essex, CH1 5HT;P Carney, Cumbria, CA11 95Q; Richard Jones, Hants, PO8 0TL; Darren Blackett, Co Durham, DL17 3JY; Matthew Haylor, Hants, SO1 6LU; Charlie Roberts, Berkshire, RG12 2JP; S Gibson, Near Bristol, BS18 1RL; Alistair May, Scotland, IV30 1QT; Richard Anderson, Belfast, BT4 3DW; Ian Hart, Bucks, MK18 2DB; Paul Walford, Bucks, MK16 0LQ; Steven Ellis, Cleveland, TS5 5JA; Antony Layzell, Cumbria, CA14 3JF; Andrew Kemp, Suffolk, IP6 9ET; Kevin Newman, Sussex, BN1 4GA; Richard Payne, Worcs, B96 6LT; Jasen P Devlin, Glasgow, G23 5BB



DURELL DEEP STRIKE

B Morris from Rochdale OL11 3QL was first out of the correct entries bag in this difference-spotting competition, and he wins himself a radio-controlled aeroplane for his troubles. Lucky fellow (or fellowess, perhaps). But that's not all – 25 runners up have won their choice of a **DURELL** game . . .

Kevin Willetts, West Midlands, B63 3LD; James Lawrid, Edinburgh, EH15 2BG; M Orlow, Derbyshire, DE7 9EX; Mr M E W Pulpher, Surrey, CR0 9JU; J I Hunter, Huddersfield, HD1 4DX; Simon Lake, West Midlands, B75 5AD; Paul Longhurst, Hertfordshire, HP23 4ED; Jonathon Clinton, Warks, CV31 1UJ; David Tame, Warks, CV36 5AR; Mr S J Gort, Derbyshire, SK17 6TS; C Perkinson, Kent, TN16 2DU; R Davies, Cleveland, TS9 7HF; Roger Callan, Cheshire, SK2 5QU; Harry Fuecks, Hants, SO51 8GQ; Richard Wong, Liverpool, L15 &JS; Mitchell Jagd, Denmark, Darren Calderwood, Scotland, PA14 5DD; Tan Wei Hoe, West Malaysia, 47300; Steen Madsew, 2630 Taastrup, Denmark; Martin Burns, Cornwall, PL12 6PE; Steven Broadfield, Staffs, B77 1DN; Graham Hollingdale, Bolton, BL2 2EL; Martin Devlin, Bucks, MK11 1DG; S P Kelly, West Yorkshire, HD3 4EP; John Welsh, Glasgow, G42 8BB

GREMLIN JIGSAW

A Philips Compact Disc Midi Hi-Fi System is winging its way to **Mark Halward** of Northants NV10 9EY – Mark's entry was first out of the correct entries bag in the Chrismas card comp. A second prize of a Sharp Ghetto Blaster goes to **Miss Toni Wills** of Leicester LE2 3AA, and the third prize of 5 **GREMLIN GRAPHICS** games goes to **Claudio Rivera Redrado** from Malaga Spain 29620. Finally, 25 runners up each receive the **GREMLIN GRAPHICS** game of their choice . . .

Nicholas Crawley, London, E10 6EP; Graham Reid, Scotland, KY2 5AD, Tony Giblino, Leics, LE13 0NQ; M J Aronow, Kent, TN8 6PN; Mark Sibson, West Yorkshire, WF5 0PF; Scott Holland, Wolverhampton, WV3 9JP; Stuart Evans, Millwall, E14 9PS; Jason Dix, Northants, NN8 1JF; Simon Rea, West Sussex, RH16 2AY; Sean Stephenson, Northumberland, NE66 3TJ; Paul Kitchener, Notts, NG13 0BA; Graeme Macbeth, Scotland, PA1 3HQ; Dylan Davies, North Wales, LL48 6AT; Jon Rose, West Sussex, PO21 3JZ; Darren James, North Wales, L68 9NE; David Wall, Hants, RG24 9PD; Mark Nydus, Cheshire, SK9 4BD; Mark Rimmer, Merseyside, PR8 4RE; Marcus Corris, Somerset, TA10 9NR; Johan Johansson, S-16224 Vallingby, Sweden; Steven Martin, West Midlands, DY5 2QQ; Graham Priddle, Cardiff, CF3 7JR; Darren Ross, Essex, IG6 7JX; Daniel Blake, Gwent, NP3 2DT; D Markillie, Cambridge, CB3 7XL.

FOOTBALL FORTUNES

Football historians put their thinking caps on for this one, hoping to win the holiday of a lifetime. **Nicholas Taylor** of Cheshire SK14 4DL collects the £1,500 to spend on a sporting holiday of a lifetime – courtesy of **CDS**. Congratulations, Nick. The following 25 runners up each receive a copy of *Brian Clough's Football Fortunes . . .*

Glenn McDowall, London, SW18 3QR; Mr C Harris, Dorset, BH17 7QQ; Mark Devine, Sheffield, S12 2GG; Graham Houldershaw, Herts, HP3 8AF; Chris Riley, Liverpool, L16 2NH; Julian Smith, Bucks, HP6 5RW; Matthew Cooke, Rhondda, Mid Glamorgan; Peter Robinson, Kent, CT9 4NA, Ian Bell, Co Durham, DH8 6PJ; Michael Potts, South Yorkshire, S66 0NJ; Paul Kitchener, Notts, NG13 0BA; Alistair May, Scotland, IV30 1QT; Jusin Whitelock, Rochdale, OL12 0QR; Ajmal Hanif, Birmingham, B9 5RB; Trevor Gorman, Wilts, SN2 3PZ; Mrs N Scarlett, Hants, RG26 6HL; David Holmes, Surrey, GU2 6NJ; Mr F Edge, Shropshire, TF1 1SA; Jason Nichols, Norfolk, PE30 5RD; David Thomas, Middlesex, UB5 5DN; David Hiller, Cowes, Isle of Wight; Stephen Hill, Birmingham, B23 6QF; Colin Rattray, Glasgow, G52 3LR; Antony Gelberg, London, NW11 0AU; Brian Phin, Aberdeen, AB2 2XS

HOT AND COLD HOLS

Mark Watkins of Buckinghamshire HP7 9BB has won a £600 holiday – It's up to him to decide whether to go somewhere hot and sunny or cold and shivery. Ten runners up each receive an **INCENTIVE** game of their choice . . .

Andrew Taylor, Lancs, BB12 6PE; Mrs J Webb, Surrey, GU21 4TQ; P D Hannigan, Co Durham, DL1 1DN; Andrew Ellerton, West Midlands, DY8 2DA; Ross Staton, North Yorks, HG4 4JA; Alan Tillyer, Avon, BS24 7DL; S G Cooper, Leicester, LE6 0WU; E J Selby, Herts, EN11 0NL; Justin Thorn, Bucks, HP21 9TU; Ian Buchan, London, SW20 0SX





TRENDIFY A MINION

Linda Kingsford from Northampton NN3 3HL supplied the most imaginative entry – all I've got to do now is persuade Oli to paint it on a shirt for me, and I'll be the Trendiest Minion in Town. Linda wins an OPUS Disk Drive and a Printer – courtesy of KONIX. Twenty runners up each receive a KONIX *Speedking* Joystick by way of consolation . . .

John Lee, 126 54 Hagersten, Sweden; Jeffrey Fuge, Bristol, BS5 8SN; Jasper Smith, Moray, IV32 7NS; Kevin Smith, Lincs, PE21 9RY; Suman Joohi, Birmingham, B24 0EA; Marcus Jeffs, Suffolk, IP16 5QZ; Sanyay Patel, Wolverhampton, WV3 0HP; Paul Tuley, Kent, DA16 3DE; Ian West, Bolton, Lancs; Paul Morris, Herts, WD2 3PF; G Pillenger, West Yorks, WF10 2AA; Justin Burns, Walsall, WS3 2PU; D Harrison, Nr Bishops Stortford, CM22 7HX; Johan Johansson, S-16224 Vallingby, Sweden; Adrian Lawes, Norfolk, NR7 8NH; Jonathon Beech, Gwent, NP1 9PD; Ashley Mason, Yorkshire, LS15 8PRJ; David Schweitzer, London, SE3 0QA; David Owens, South Devon, PL21 9BT; Robert Hunter, Lincs, NG32 1JB.

MINIONS PAINTY REVENGE

David Edge from Shropshire TF7 5RX, and **Mr P A Pethers** from Snowsfield SE1 3TD will both be joining some of the PIRANHA and Newsfield staff for a day out at the Combat Zone . . . sometime around the Easter holidays. Thirty runners up each receive a copy of PIRANHA's *Rogue Trooper* . . .



Ian Grainger, Hants, PO2 0PS; Dylan Wyn Owen, North Wales, LL77 8YX; J Singh, Telford, Shropshire; Roger Jessanges, Hants, PO5 1SA; Carlos Marreiros, London, SW4 6AU; Stephen Taylor, Scotland, KY11 1EE; Alastair Dunn, Edinburgh, EH4 8AJ; Malcolm Perryman, Surrey, CR3 5JE; Stephen P Clarke, Kirkby, L32 9QL; Nicholas Wrigglesworth, Kent, CT2 9HR; Mark Sibson, West Yorks, WF5 0PF; Miles Tishe, Wilts, SP4 9PN; Rodney Tregale, Berks, SL2 1LB; David Johnson, Sheffield, S8 9FY; Leigh Prosho, Essex, RM18 8NP; Mr Robert Garbriel, Devon, EX15 3EN; Simon Tierney, London, W1H 1AL; N Gunatilleke, Mitcham Junction, Surrey; Sean Burke, Birmingham, B32 3RZ; Gareth Jamieson, Dumfries and Galloway, DG7 1JG; Sean Cooney, Roscommon, Ireland; Shaun Brace, Tyne and Wear, SR20 0NT; Stephen Shoulin, Carlisle, CA2 6TW; Graham Leech, Cumbria, CA2 7LZ; David Wheller, Warks, CV8 1AQ; Craig Tevendale, Shropshire, SY4 3LB; Michael Pini, Essex, SS13 2AH; Michael Austin, Staffs, WS7 8QT; Hugo Allen, Avon, BA2 6LD; Spencer Wakelam, Wirral, L61 4XF.

STOP DOC MARTIN PRATTING ABOUT

Michael Savage-Jones from London, SW4 9HG wins an ARIOLASOFT goodybag – there were some very neat Graeme Kidd frighteners amongst the entries: I'll start to build a couple soon, and let you know how they work! T-Shirts produced by ARIOLASOFT are on their way to 25 runners-up . . .

Stephen Grant, Sussex, BN1 6UR; Keith Mealin, Kent, SA11 8EX; Darren Porter, Northants, NN13 6BY; Mark Phillips, London, SW10 9HS; David Hutchinson, Cleveland, TS13 4DZ; Shaun Hill, Kent, ME13 7SH; Roger Kelly, Leics, LE12 9TY; Jonathon Lewis, Shropshire, SY5 6RN; Martin Thorsson, D31 75 Jarpag, Sweden; Andrew Winter, Northampton, NN3 5BB; Mr M Furtado, London, N3 2HN; Sean Cooney, Roscommon, Eire; Danny Amato, Greenford, Middlesex; Paul Thomas, Liverpool, L13 4AD; Daniel Wallington, Warwick, CV35 8XJ; Stephen Ward, Co Clare, Eire; Mark Westmoreland, Notts, NG12 3DE; Graham Leech, Cumbria, CA2 7LZ; Scott Mario Ribanks, Scotland, FK1 4JH; Alan Walton, Lancs, BR2 3NG; Mr James Brown, West Yorkshire, WF5 0QD; Kenson Low, Middlesex, HA0 3RG; Ian Treasure, Cornwall, TR12 6HT; D Fox, N. Goole, DN14 8QS; Stephen Click, Cleveland, TS7 0AB



ON YER BIKES!

Rosalind Whitworth from Coventry CV6 5ES, and **Mark York** of Glos GL2 0AP both win a BMX bike, thanks to ELITE. Thirty runners up collect a copy of *Space Harrier* . . .

Mark Cobb, Scotland, DD4 7PD; Kevin O Keeffe, Co Kerry, Eire; Peter Moore, West Midlands, WV11 3DJ; Paul Wilson, Scotland, EH5 3HU; Oliver Byrne, Hants, GU13 9PJ; Steven Gray, Redditch, B98 8QG; Scott Hallam, Leicester, LE9 6AL; Stephen A Blower, Sheffield, S8 0PL; Stevan Robathan, Birmingham, B8 1DR; Gerald Tuohy, Co Tipperary, Ireland; Alex Campbell, London, NW6 1RE; Don Ramsay, West Yorkshire, BD2 4NN; Darren Dunne, Elland, HX5 9EF; Marc Lawrence, Herts, WD2 4DX; Jason Aark, Essex, CM13 2TN; Chris Woodley, Dorset, BH23 8NF; Robert Bond, London, SE1 8XX; Mrs C Middleton, Sheffield, S8 9FN; David Parker, Lancs, OL12 5DL; Stephen Deary, Tyne and Wear, NE10 0YN; Steven R Whiting, London, SE18 7TL; John MacKenzie, Motherwell, ML1 5NP; David Mumford, Derby, S43 4SD; Lee Prutton, Beds, SG15 6SB; Jon Cripps, Herts, WD3 5BQ; Chris Thomas, Somerset, TA5 2JR; Peter Barnett, Cheshire CW2 8HW; Paul Hrbert, Staffs, WS7 8RE; Keith Wood, Edinburgh, EH17 7AZ; B Shimmings, East Sussex, TN38 8BD.

KAT KOMP

Flipbots are on their way to the following ten people . . . they came up with some really neat names for the Katmen that give poor old MT-Ed such a tough time in *Kat Trap*, the GENESIS game.

David Windall, Kent, TN15 0DH; Jason Edwards, Essex, CO3 5LL; Phillip Kennedy, Nr Wigan, WN5 8TX; Andrew Longwill, Scotland, PA2 9AJ; Richard Stone, Hants, RG26 6JF; Steven Polock, Wiltshire, SN9 6AY; Shaun Fairbrother, Burton-On-Trent, DE11 9LB; Peter Maden, Cheshire, CW2 7JE; Brian Poole, Bolton, BL6 5TA; Justin Lloyd, Cornwall, TR15 3XF

MINION SPOT THE BALL

A winner receives the MIRANDA 35MM camera, and that person is **Anthony Cox**, a Lancashire lad whose Post Code is BB1 9NS! He came closes to spotting the puck, but 30 runners-up marked their X close enough to the centre of the puck to justify receiving a free copy of the ARGUS game, *Xeno*.

Graham Clifford, Hants, GU14 9LF; C A Sharp, Sheffield, S25 GE; Ross Higgins, Cornwall, L7PL 7TE; Derek Findlay, Cumbria, CA8 2DH; Stephen Cornwell, West Yorkshire, WF8 2PT; Rik Payne, Worcs, B96 6LT; Ian Wellaway, Somerset, BA20 2LF; Kenton Cool, Bucks, SL9 0QD; Mr Carl Tandy, Kent, ME20 6LS; Mark Sinclair, Norwich, NR9 3NQ; Chris Lafferty, Stathclyde, ML2 7DZ; A Hulmes, Cheshire, WA15 7SZ; Kevin Fisher, Birmingham, B13 0SW; Iain McConnell, Mid Glamorgan, CF37 1RZ; Mr M Snee, Wirral, L49 1SP; David Edge, Shropshire, TF7 5RX; Jorgen Jacobsen, DK 2600 Glostrup, Denmark; Daniel Gregorous, Middlesex, UB4 8RE; Mr Robert Gabriel, Devon, EX15 3EN; C Phillips, Northumberland, NE43 7RQ; Darren Barton, Gwent, NP1 9WP; Paul Bartlett, Herts, EN7 5QR; A W Barker, Cambridge, CB1 6EU; D M Shannon, Co Antrim, BT36 8ER; Paul Morris, Herts, WD2 3PF; Adam Wilde, Leicester, LE8 3PU; J Dearling, Cornwall, TR7 3EJ; Kevin Thompson, Essex, E4 8L9; Jonathan Marshall, West Sussex, BN14 0DZ; Phillip J Piggott, Essex, CO4 5DG

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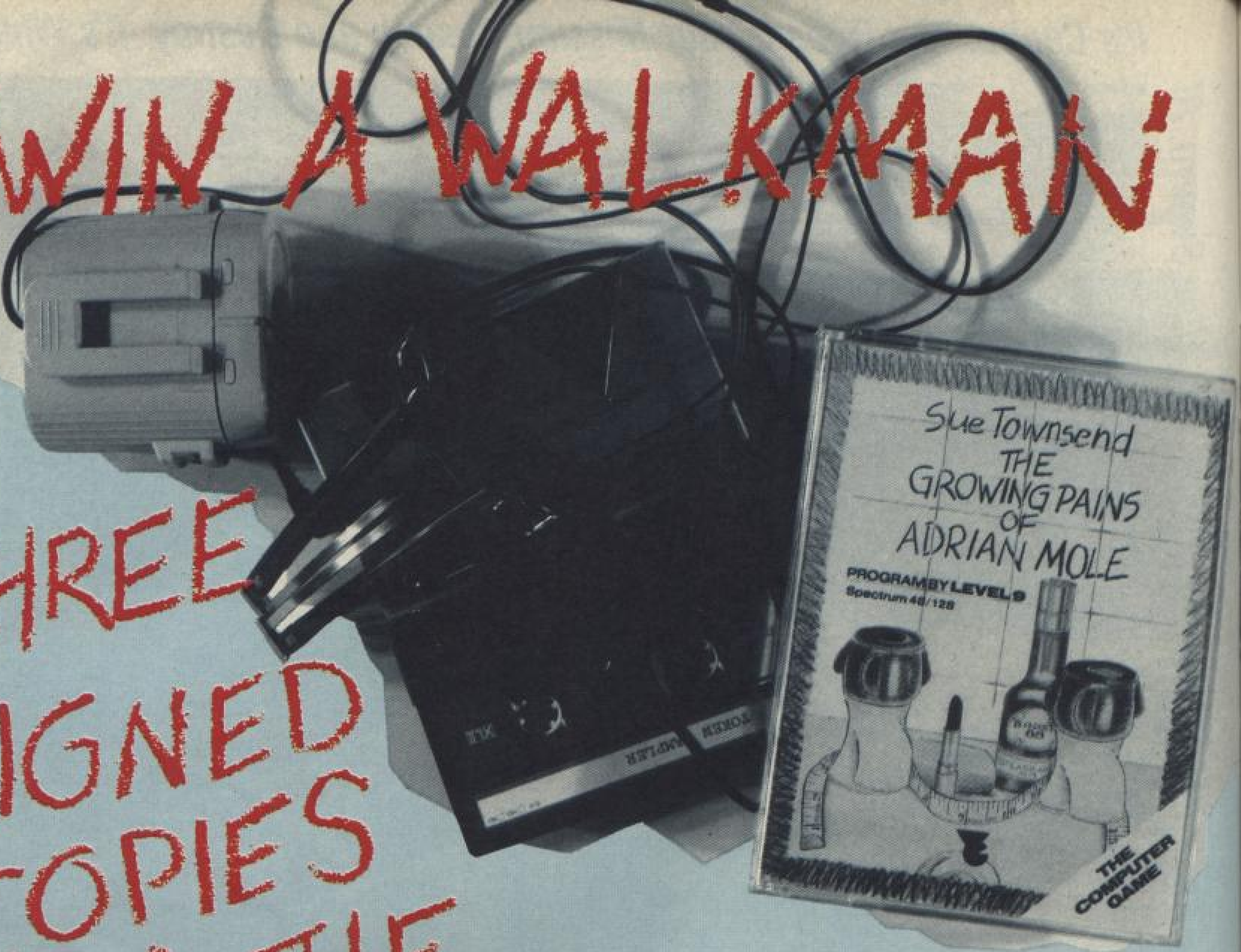
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WIN A WALKMAN



THREE SIGNED COPIES OF THE GROWING PAINS OF ADRIAN MOLE TO BE WON

Those well known adventure people, LEVEL 9 have written a game based on the trials and tribulations of Adrian's Life, and it's called *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole*. The game follows events in Adrian's diary and the player tries to unravel his pubescent problems. As I was sitting in the broom cupboard having a quick break my mind started to drift. Just imagine if Adrian Mole got a job at CRASH Towers as the new Comps Minion . . .

A quick chat to those nice people at VIRGIN who are publishing the game, *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole*, and I had some prizes for you to win. Compile a short diary (just a couple of days or maybe a week) describing Adrian's dilemmas as he has to run around after everyone here at the Towers (just like I do).

The best diary wins its author a Sony Walkman, like the one Adrian longs after in the TV series. The three next-best entrants get a copy of the book, The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole autographed by **Sue Townsend** the authoress (coo). And then 25 runners-up stand to win a copy of the Spectrum game.

I was very pleased with myself for thinking up such a good competition and told Graeme Kidd. Unfortunately Graeme thought it was a good idea too. So good that he said it wouldn't be a bad idea at all if Adrian Mole did get a job here because he'd probably do a better job than me. Sulk.

Whisk your diaries into me at CRASH, making sure that they arrive no later than 26th March. Mark them: ADRIAN MOLE – NEW COMPS MINION, CRASH TOWERS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.

Every Monday night I rush home from work, gobble my tea and quickly help Mummy Minion wash-up. Then I sink into the arm chair in front of the telly and watch The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole, a peanut butter sarnie in one hand and a strong cup of tea in the other.

It's great. I can really identify with poor Adrian. Heaven knows, my formative years are just as hectic as his, but I reckon that I'm even worse off. At least Adrian only has to put up with scatty parents and the odd problem with his obnoxious girlfriend, Pandora. I get all that, plus all the hassles of working for CRASH!

I'd like to see how Adrian would cope with running up and down stairs carrying all the post which has to be delivered – at least seven times a day. Would he keep his temper when the Spikey-Haired ones from ZZAP! demanded yet another cup of tea? (There's never a clean mug left for me.) How would Adrian like trudging up and down Gravel Hill in all weathers, ferrying take-away curries to the food-freaks that work on LM? I bet the young Mole would go into the throes of depression when the Girlie Tipster practises her new make-up on him and then parades him around the office for everyone to see (and laugh at), like she does to me. In fact I was wondering if Adrian would cope at all and that gave me a great idea for a competition.

Crash Competition


ULTIMATE
PLAY THE GAME
PRESENT
JETMAN
HAVING STOWED AWAY ON THE MONSTERS SPACE-SHIP, BEEN ATTACKED BY A CHEF WITH A CHOPPER, LOST HIS FABULOUS EYE OF OKTUP, AND HAD HIS DINNER DATE CANCELLED, OUR HERO IS NOW A RAVING LOONY...
YAP!
BLARGH
DROOL!
SNORK!
TROMP
TROMP
TROMP
RAVE
RAVE
RAVE
BLARGH!
BLAM
FLEE!
OH, IT'S YOU...
ME GOIN' KILL YOU!! YOU GOIN' DIE!!!
THIS IS TRUE...
?
I YAM HEADING FOR THAT OL' MONSTERS GRAVEYARD IN THE SKY 'COS I HAS BEEN POISONED! BUT I HAVE LEFT EVERYTHING I POSSES TO YOU, OL' BUDDY.... HERE'S MY WILL, LOOKIT!
BWAH!
SOB!
RICH!
AS SOON AS I IS DECEASED (SOB) YOU WILL GET THIS HERE SHIP, ALL MY MONEY, ALL MY OL' EAGLE COMICS, MY SINCLAIR C5, MY TOE-NAIL CLIPPERS... AN' TYPHOID UNLESS YOU BURIES ME QUICK...
LAST TESTAMENT
SNIVEL
HEH-HEH
RICH
... ON THE MONSTERS GRAVEYARD PLANET!
I'M GONNA BE RICH! I'M GONNA BE RICH! I'M GONNA BE RICH! I'M GONNA BE RICH! I'M GONNA BE RICH! I'M...
IF ONLY I WASN'T POISONED! IF ONLY I HADN'T SWALLERED THAT BAUBLE! IF ONLY I DONE SKWISHED THIS LOONY YEARS AGO...
RUB
RUB
RUB
OOPS! THE MONSTER HAS RUBBED IT'S TUM, INSIDE WHICH IS THE FABULOUS EYE OF OKTUP....
BUMF
?
IT'S THE FUTURE... IT'S THE EYE OF OKTUP... IT'S US... YOU'RE IN JAIL... I'M HOLDING THE KEY... AND I'M SMILING...
BWAH!
I'M NOT GOIN' TO DIE... SOB!
I'M NOT GOIN' BE RICH... SOB!
OH, I'M SO HA-PEEE!
I'M GONNA TREAT US BOTH TO A CHINKEE... I'M GONNA GET KING PRAWN ON RICE... TWICE! WHAT YOU GOIN' GET??
I'M GONNA GET EXCITED... AND MY EYE BACK... ONCE!


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...the name of the game
Screen shots taken from various computer formats
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PEN FRIEND PLEA

Janne Nerg **lives in Finland and has a healthy interest in computers. He'd like a pen friend from anywhere in the world to exchange hints, tips and games. If you'd like a pen friend in far off Finland then Janne can be found at this address:**
Janne Nerg, Suitsikatu 3F56,
15830 Lahti, Finland.

Another month's Playing Tips is ready to be packed off to the hallowed ones Up In Art. Doesn't it come around quickly these days? Once again I've got a truly breath-taking tips section for you to peruse at your leisure. There are POKEs for Elite's *Space Harrier*, Gremlin's *Avenger*, Hewson's *Firelord* and many, many more. There are complete solutions for *Contact Sam Cruise* and 128K *Knight Tyme* – not to mention some awe-inspiring maps. There are the three levels of *Cobra* courtesy of Matthew Bauer from Rochdale. Jeff Fuge has drawn a dainty map for Part Two of *Fairlight II*, and Top Cartographer this month is Wayne Birch for five more of the Dreadnoughts in *Uridium*. Top Tipster for March is Jon North for his POKEs on *Scooby Doo*, *Terminus* and *Dragon's Lair* as well as reams of routines which are, as yet, unprinted in Playing Tips. £20 worth of software will go to both these lucky lads.

You'll be pleased to hear that the ZX Printer has been made redundant and I'm now using an Alphacom. Every POKE this month has been tested, scrutinised, checked and re-checked so if you can't get a routine to work, the fault is either in your typing or your copy of the game.

I'm currently compiling a Tips Supplement like the one Robin Candy did last April – so get those POKEs, tips, cheats and maps flooding in. Routines that give different variations of games would be greatly appreciated. Now's the chance for you to gain immortality and notoriety in the pages of Playing Tips. So get to it!

SPACE HARRIER POKES

Space Harrier **is the latest arcade conversion released by** Elite. **Completion poses quite a problem, as there are a total of sixteen gruelling levels. However, if you're a good mate of** Ian Stonelake **from Uxbridge in Middlesex you'll have no problem finishing the game, because Ian's the author of these helpful POKEs. Type the listing into your Spectrum, press RUN, start the** ***Space Harrier*** **tape and you'll have infinite lives. Ian mentions in his letter that the POKE may look as if it isn't working because the life counter still goes down. But never fear you'll still have infinite lives.**

```
10 REM SPACE HARRIER HACK
BY IAN STONELAKE
20 CLEAR 64000: LOAD
""CODE
30 POKE 65289,196: POKE
65293,193: POKE 65449,178:
POKE 65450,143
40 FOR n=65488 TO 65494:
READ a: POKE n,a: NEXT n
50 RANDOMIZE USR 65224
60 DATA 33, 194, 191, 34, 43, 202,
201
```

GAUNTLET CHEAT

Here's a little cheat for those of you who would like to delve into the deeper recesses of US Gold's ***Gauntlet*** **and amass a huge score. I must admit that I've actually received quite a few letters telling me of this bug, and I've been just the tiniest bit biased in selecting the people to credit because they come from my home town of Weston-Super-Mare. To be precise,** Matthew Nation **and** Gary Wagner **live in a small village just outside Weston called Locking. Anyway enough of this self indulgent waffle and on with the cheat. When you're playing** ***Gauntlet*** **press SYMBOL SHIFT and you'll be able to walk through walls! Gosh. Enthusiasts of this game know that this will considerably aid your gameplay. Thanks to everyone else who sent in cheats.**

AN OLD FAVOURITE

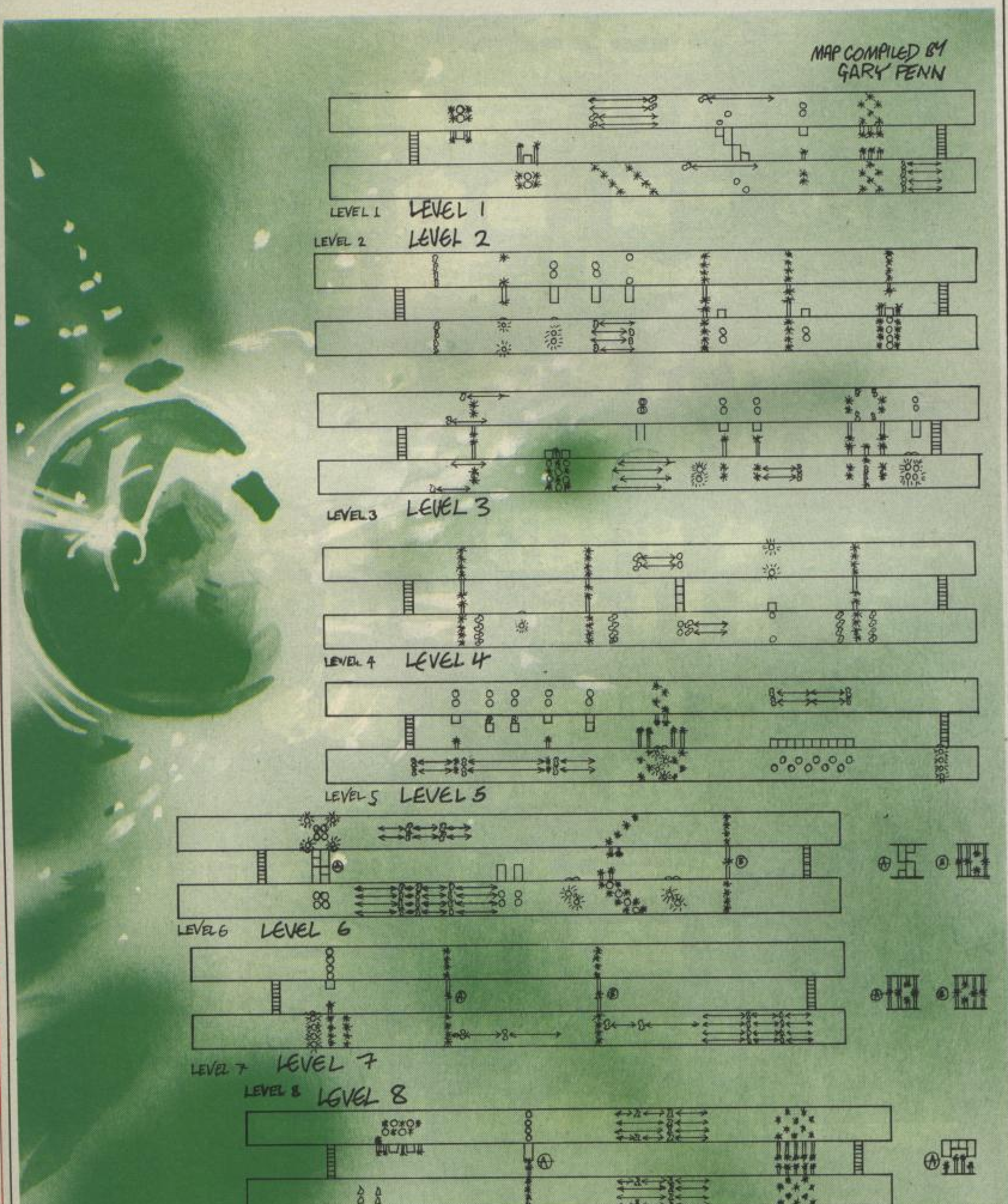
Absolutely eons ago I printed some tips for Mastertronic**'s budget Smash,** ***Knight Tyme*** **on the 48K spectrum. Alas I didn't realise that so many people who had bought the 128K version were still having problems finishing the game. Sackfuls of mail (well almost . . .) have been pouring in since the first tips were published, begging for the solution for the 128K version. Unfortunately, I couldn't oblige, as I didn't have the solution myself. However, what should I find lurking in the bottom of the post sack the other morning but the complete solution. Oh joy, I thought. Now I can pass these tips on to the faithful CRASH readers. But don't thank me. Direct your 'thank yous' towards** Neil MacPherson **and** Ben Borley **who live near Exeter in Devon. Take it away lads (I certainly don't want it!) . . .**

First and foremost, get the McTablet food from Sarab and go left until you can go no further. Get the camera, go right, and command Klink to go to sleep. Go right and take the gas mask from Sharon. Pick up the advert and the pewter tankard. Go left again and drop the advert underneath the star map. Jump upwards and get the map. Give the map and the tankard to Gordon and take the instant film. Give the instant film to S3E3 along with the camera, which you should still be clutching in your earnest paw. Un-wear the cloak of invisibility and command S3E3 to help. Take the pot of glue and the photograph from S3E3 and go to Derby VI. Command him to help. Take the ID card which he flings at you and wear it. If you're lucky, it should now contain your photo. Go to the bridge, move the starship to Polaris, and then on to Starbase One. Communicate with the beings there and request an overhaul and a re-fuel. Beam down to co-ordinates 1-2-3. Pick up and wear the pair of boots. Make sure that you have the advert. Go as far right as possible and get the Quark bomb. On the way back, get the first bag which contains potatoes. Beam back to the ship using co-ordinates 1-2-3. Now move the ship to Gideon and onto Juice. Then go to Monopole via Ardia and Pern. Beam down to Monopole, co-ordinates 1-8-4.

When you arrive, check that you are wearing the boots, cloak and gas mask. Walk right until you get to the room *Nearly There*. On the floor you will see a small triangle. Pick this up and walk right to Hooper. Take the talisman and part of the sundial from him. If he refuses to give you either, then fortify him. Move the starship to Starbase One again and re-fuel. Move to Spica. Find Klink, give him the Quark bomb and command him to help. Now move the starship to Reef. From now on always move at Time Distort Five. Go to Fermous and onto Starbase Two. Refuel and move to Retreat via Plop Plop. Beam down (co-ordinates 8-4-1). Once again wear the boots, cloak and the gas mask. Go right to the room with the barrier and cast the remove spell. Go to the right and get the final part of the Sundial from Murphy. Go back to the ship and put all three parts of the sundial together. Cast a Lightning spell and pick up the repaired sundial. Move the starship to Starbase Two and beam down. Wear the gasmask, and walk right – through the first wall. The Tyme Guardians will give you a broken time machine. Go back to the ship and move from planet to planet. Travel at Time Distort Five and ask all the planets to re-fuel you; Plop Plop, Fermous, Reef, Spica, Starbase One, Polaris, Hestia, Parkland, Naff and Gangrole.

When you arrive at Gangrole go to the right, enter the Time Machine, pick it up and wear it. Cast a Lightning bolt spell and launch the Time Machine. The computer will now tell you that you've escaped with 97%. And that's just as well because you're just in time for the latest Magic Knight adventure called *Storm Bringer*.

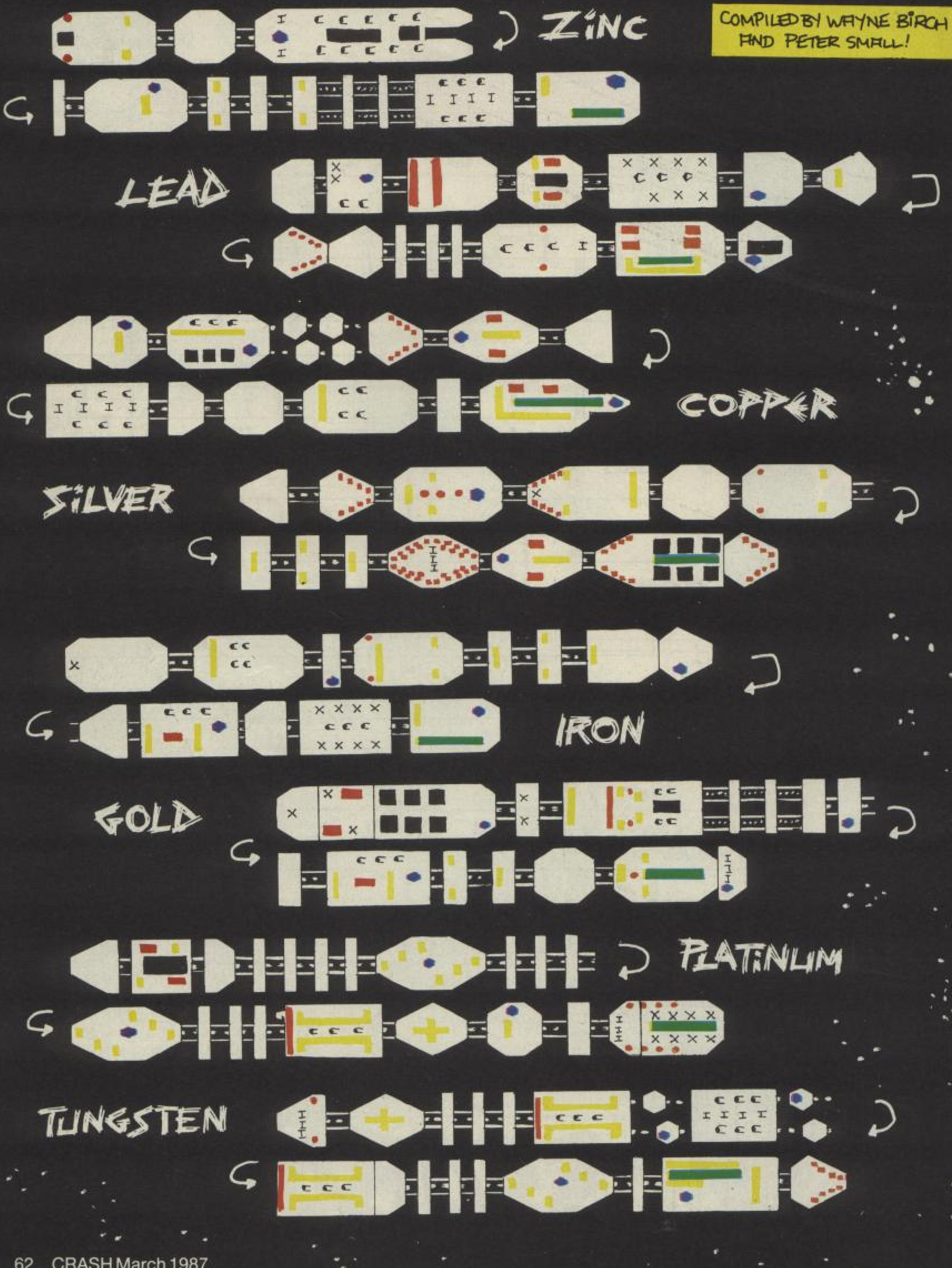

COBRA
THE MAP.
KNIFE
PISTOL
MACHINE GUN
INVINCIBILITY PILL
ROUND 1 CITY SCAPE
WRAP AROUND PLAY AREA
PISTOL
DAGGER
INVINCIBILITY PILL
MACHINE GUN
ROUND 2
RURAL AREA
WRAP AROUND PLAY AREA.
DAGGER
INVINCIBILITY PILL
MACHINE GUN
PISTOL
Wrap around play-area
ROUND 3
FACTORY

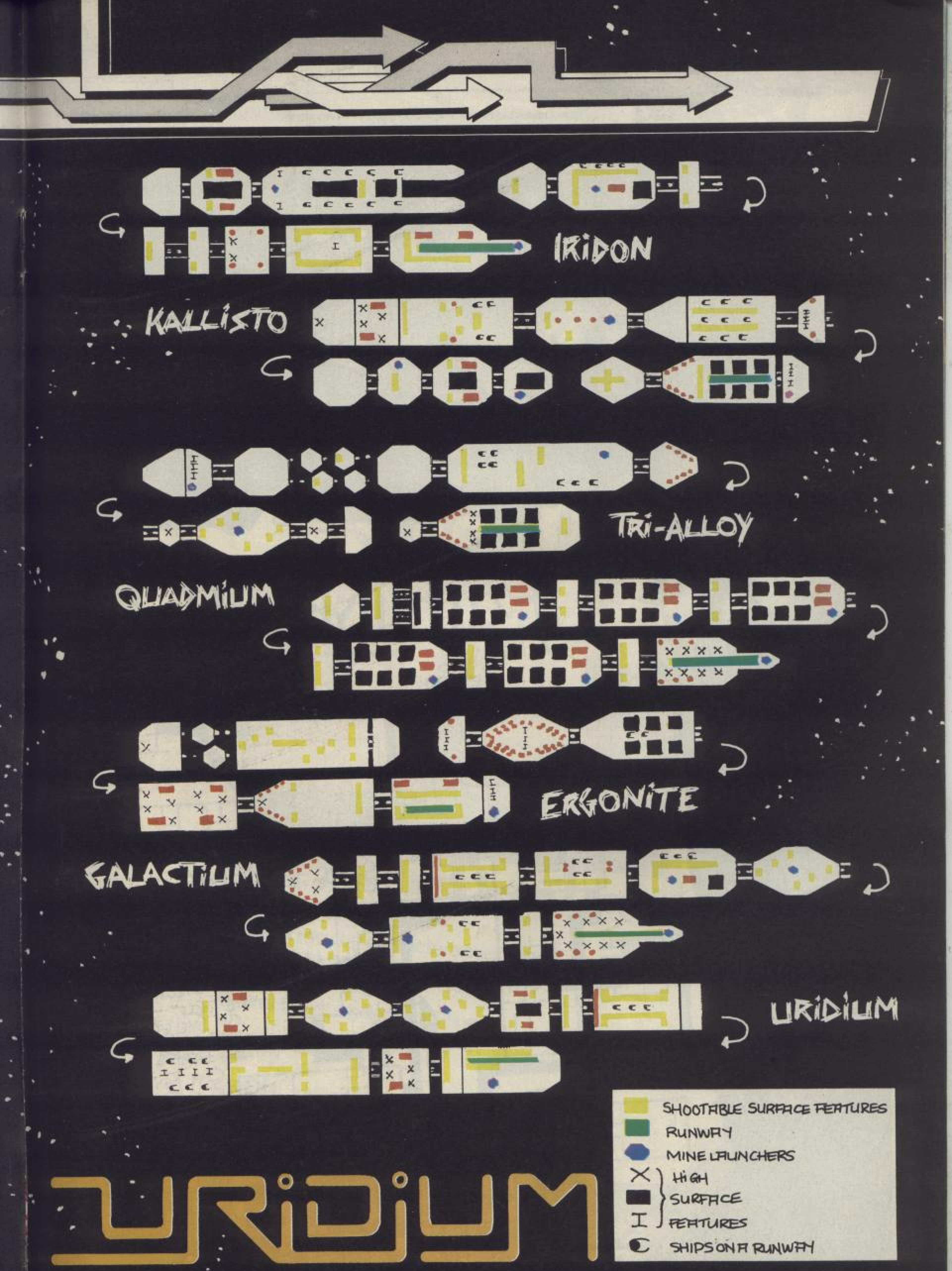


IMPOSSABALL THE MAP

PLAYING TIPS

COMPILED BY WAYNE BIRCH AND PETER SMALL!




IRIDON
KALLISTO
TRI-ALLOY
QUADMIUM
ERGONITE
GALACTIUM
URIDIUM
SHOOTABLE SURFACE FEATURES
RUNWAY
MINE LAUNCHERS
HIGH
SURFACE
FEATURES
SHIPS ON A RUNWAY
URIDIUM


Fairlight II
Key
M MASKED MAN
SPECTRE
E ELF
SKELETON
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WALL
F FLYING CARPET
MAP BY JEFF FUGE - BRISTOL


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NOSFERATU CHEAT

Piranha **had a CRASH Smash a while back with their game *Nosferatu* based on that famous Vampire. It consists of three levels which have to be loaded separately. This is a bit of a pain. If you never got past Level One you'll have been missing out on the delights of Wismar in the second section. So, if you suffer from an inability to play *Nosferatu*, then fear not, as help is at hand.** Brett Lowe, **who lives in Bury in Lancashire, has found a simple yet effective way to get onto Level Two – without having to complete Level One beforehand.**

The main reason why Part Two can't be loaded before finishing Part One, is because the computer won't accept a hash sign, and the second section of the game is called Part#2. The way around this is to load in the game so that the tape stops at the start of Part Two. Re-set the computer and type LOAD ""CODE 40960 and re-start the tape. Part Two will load into the computer. Now save it to tape by entering SAVE "PART2 "CODE 40960, 6896 (IMPORTANT – don't put a space between 'Part' and '2'). When you've saved the bytes, re-set the computer and load *Nosferatu* from the beginning. Select the Load Old Game option (6 on the menu) and type 'Part2' as the filename. Section Two of the game will now load in and you can romp around Wismar to your hearts content – handy, eh?

FIRELORD POKES

Hewson **have had a spate of hit games recently. *Firelord*, written by** Steve Crow **tells the story of a cursed land, ruled over by an evil Queen who has condemned her kingdom to eternal fire. Into this mess comes a hero knight, who must trade with the Queen and eventually return the land to normal. Last issue we had a map of *Firelord*, but if you're still stuck, then here are some POKEs as well. Type in the following routine and include the POKEs that you want to use. Line 105 gives the player infinite lives. Line 106 allows you infinite trading. 107 makes the hero knight shoot continuously. Line 108 stops your energy going down when you clash with the fire spirits, and line 109 stops you dying after you've been caught cheating in the trading screen. Thanks must go to** Chris Wild **who lives in Oldham in Lancs.**

```
1 REM FIRELORD POKES BY C
WILD
5 CLEAR 65535
10 LET add=USR "a"
11 READ n
12 IF n=999 THEN GOTO 15
13 POKE add, n
14 LET add=add+1: GOTO 11
15 PAPER 0: INK 0: BORDER 0:
CLS
16 RANDOMIZE USR 65368
100 DATA 62, 255, 55, 221, 33, 39
101 DATA 244, 17, 125, 2, 205, 86
102 DATA 5, 48, 243, 62, 255, 55
103 DATA 221, 33, 0, 64, 17, 87
104 DATA 191, 205, 86, 5
111 DATA 195, 79, 94, 999
105 DATA 175, 50, 205, 134 (INFINITE LIVES)
106 DATA 175, 50, 125, 135 (INFINITE TRADING)
107 DATA 175, 50, 170, 150, 62,
7, 50, 156, 150 (SHOOT CONTINUOUSLY)
108 DATA 62, 58, 50, 168, 136
(NO ENERGY LOSS)
109 DATA 175, 50, 38, 156, 62, 58,
50, 67, 156 (STOPS DEATH
AFTER CHEATING – USE WITH
INFINITE LIVES POKE)
```

Remember not to type the words in brackets from lines 105 to 109 in the DATA (although I doubt that I really have to tell you this).

FIRELORD POKES MARK II

If you don't fancy using the POKEs sent in by Chris Wild then here are some from David McCandless **which make the game even easier. Type in the following routine, and you'll find that you have immortality – your knight can walk through fires and nasties without dying. You'll never be caught when stealing on the Trading screens. You can stay as long as you like on the Trading Screens – all the nasties will disappear (even the clouds of bubbles), and of course you'll have infinite lives.**

```
10 REM FIRELORD POKES
20 REM D.McCANDLESS
30 CLEAR 65535: LET t=0
40 FOR i=65280 TO 65375
50 READ a: POKE i,a: LET t=t+a
NEXT i
60 IF t<> 8182 THEN PRINT
"ERROR": STOP
70 POKE 65327, 184: POKE
65332, 153: REM IMMORTALITY
80 POKE 65337, 155:POKE
65342, 155: REM ALL THEFTS
SUCCESSFUL
90 POKE 65347, 154: POKE
65352, 155: REM INFINITE BATTERING ENERGY
100 POKE 65357, 167: POKE
65362, 167: REM NO NASTIES
110 POKE 65367, 156: POKE
65372, 134: REM INFINITE LIVES
120 PRINT " PLAY FIRELORD
TAPE FROM START"
130 RANDOMIZE USR 65280
140 DATA 49, 255, 255, 221, 33,
0, 52, 17
150 DATA 0, 192, 62, 255, 55, 205,
86, 5
160 DATA 48, 241, 33, 32, 255, 17,
0, 64
170 DATA 1, 100, 0, 237, 176, 195,
0, 64
180 DATA 33, 255, 253, 17, 255,
255, 1, 0
190 DATA 165, 237, 184, 62, 201,
50, 6, 0
200 DATA 62, 24, 50, 1, 0, 62, 0, 50
210 DATA 90, 0, 62, 0, 50, 91, 0, 62
220 DATA 205, 50, 128, 0, 62, 24,
50, 97
230 DATA 0, 62, 201, 50, 148, 0,
62, 201
240 DATA 50, 164, 0, 62, 0, 50, 38,
0
250 DATA 62, 0, 50, 205, 0, 195,
79, 94
```

AVENGER POKES

It looks as though there's a battle about to begin between the Mega Team **from Stoke On Trent and those industrious** Hackers from Haxby (and Pocklington). **According to the Haxby lads they're still unrivalled when it comes to contributing the top hints in Playing Tips. And I must admit that I haven't heard anything from the** Mega Team **in quite some time . . .**

Anyway, the Hackers **from Haxby,** Chris Smith, Jason Bean **and** Dereck Austin **have come up with the goods again this month. Not only have they sent in routines for *Avenger* and *Terra Cresta*, but they've also solved *Contact Sam Cruise*. Here's the routine for *Avenger*, the popular follow up to *Way Of The Tiger*. Type the following into your Spectrum and press RUN. You'll then have an infinite amount of time – and 200 keys into the bargain!**

```
10 REM C SMITH, J BEAN, D
AUSTIN
20 REM AVENGER POKES
30 LOAD ""CODE
40 POKE 33071, 195
50 POKE 33072, 80
60 POKE 33073, 195
70 POKE 33046, 48
80 POKE 33047, 93
90 FOR f=50000 TO 50028:
READ a: POKE f,a: NEXT f
100 DATA 33, 98, 195, 17, 48
110 DATA 93, 1, 20, 0, 237
120 DATA 176, 221, 33, 0, 132
130 DATA 195, 51, 129, 62, 201
140 DATA 50, 207, 202, 50, 92
150 DATA 160, 195, 128, 157
160 RANDOMIZE USR 32768
```

TERRA CRESTA POKES

Once again the Hackers from Haxby (and Pocklington) **have come up with a handy POKE or two. This time it's for *Terra Cresta*,** Imagine's **arcade conversion. Type in the following routine and press RUN. Your little craft will then have infinite lives.**

```
10 REM C SMITH, J BEAN D
AUSTIN
20 REM TERRA CRESTA POKES
30 RESTORE
40 CLEAR 65535
50 LET TOT=0: LET w=1
60 FOR f=49985 TO 50149
70 READ a: LET TOT=TOT+w*a
80 POKE f,a: LET w=w+1
90 NEXT f
100 IF TOT<> 1695455 THEN
PRINT "ERROR IN DATA":
BEEP 1,1: STOP
110 PRINT #1; AT 1,7; "START
TERRA TAPE"
120 RANDOMIZE USR 49985
1000 DATA 221, 33, 203, 92, 17,
234, 6, 62
1010 DATA 255, 55, 205, 86, 5, 48,
241, 243
1020 DATA 237, 94, 33, 109, 195,
229, 33, 194
1030 DATA 98, 229, 51, 51, 17, 99,
252, 1
1040 DATA 43, 3, 33, 253, 94, 62,
202, 237
1050 DATA 79, 195, 194, 98, 33,
135, 195, 229
1060 DATA 33, 135, 252, 229, 51,
51, 17, 145
1070 DATA 252, 33, 145, 252, 1,
253, 2, 62
1080 DATA 150, 237, 79, 195, 135,
252, 33, 145
1090 DATA 252, 17, 193, 138, 1,
92, 0, 237
1100 DATA 176, 33, 212, 138, 34,
217, 138, 34
1110 DATA 221, 138, 33, 202, 138,
34, 229, 138
1120 DATA 33, 239, 138, 34, 249,
138, 62, 195
1130 DATA 50, 13, 139, 33, 181,
195, 34, 14
1140 DATA 139, 195, 193, 138, 62,
195, 50, 77
1150 DATA 255, 33, 206, 255, 34,
78, 255, 33
1160 DATA 206, 195, 17, 208, 255,
1, 34, 0
1170 DATA 237, 176, 195, 243,
254, 33, 225, 255
1180 DATA 17, 204, 167, 1, 7, 0,
237, 176
1190 DATA 33, 23, 252, 195, 3, 91,
62, 4
1200 DATA 50, 181, 255, 0, 0
```

CONTACT SAM CRUISE SOLUTION

Microsphere, who brought you *Skool Daze* have taken a different direction in their latest release. *Contact Sam Cruise* follows the life of a Private Detective as he struggles to solve the case of the Bali Budgie. The Hackers from Haxby **were among the first to send in a *correct* solution. They also want to send a message to one of their chums. I reckon that one good turn deserves another so here it is . . . "*Good luck M Delback at your new school.*" Right, on with the tips.**

From the start, go to the top of the Hotel Royale. Find the body and answer the telephone. Get the key from No.31 and ring up 7337 twice. After that ring 7162.

Go to No. 15 and pick up the ringing telephone twice. Pick up another key. Ring 7162 until you are told about the Fat Man having two keys. Go to the top of the building which is to the left of No. 19. Jump onto the side of the wall and then carefully climb down the fire escape. When you get to the bottom, wait until the Fat Man gets underneath (he's the corpulent geezer dressed in white) and jump on him. Having knocked him over, walk on a bit and you'll find another key. Now head towards the green room which is the furthest to the right in the Hotel Royale. To get past the gangster go into room 27, cross the roof, go across the police station roof and onto the roof of No. 31. Go down through No. 31 and continue until you get to the hotel.

Once you're in the green room change your disguise to that of a Nun. Now answer the telephone. Next go left to the building with the catwalk (it's next to No. 74). Go onto the roof and jump onto the edge of the building. When the guard is at the far side, jump onto him and knock him over. Run past him and into No. 74 where you will pick another key. You should now have all four keys. The next task is to get a grappling hook from No. 74. To do this, get picked up by the gangster inside No. 74. When he drops you outside, run quickly back to No. 74 and you'll be able to pick up the grappling hook before he gets back, as long as the police don't recognise you. With the grappling hook in your possession go to the top right hand corner of the building next to the fire escape. Face right and press C and you'll throw the grappling hook.

If you were wondering how to get past the gangster in front of the police station here's how. Make him follow you as far left as possible, go to the top of No. 31 and jump off the roof. If your calculations are correct you'll knock the gangster over as you land and you can then run past him). Jump onto the side of the wall and cross the rope. Once across, press down and you'll enter a room where you'll find a safe with 4 locks. Pick up the budgie and then drop onto the top of No.19. Press the fuse and keep going down and get out as fast as possible.

With the budgie in your possession, head towards your apartment. Ring up Lana (7162), and when she is half way up the stairs telephone the police. As long as you are wearing a blue disguise she'll be put in jail – otherwise you'll be shot. The case is now solved – but beware, the mob are after you.

SCOOBY DOO

This POKE should have appeared in Playing Tips at least a month ago. Instead it decided to take a short holiday at the bottom of my tips file, and only surfaced this morning when I was having my annual clear out. Jon North **(for it is he who wrote this POKE) is a serious opponent for the** Haxby Hackers **when it comes to the sheer volume of work which he sends in . . . better look out lads! The beauty of this POKE is its length. It shouldn't take longer than a couple of seconds to type into your Spectrum. It may look as if it isn't working to begin with, but be patient and it will. Type in the following routine and press RUN:**

```
10 REM SCOOBY DOO BY JON NORTH
20 LOAD ""CODE
30 POKE 64027, 86: POKE 64028,5
40 RANDOMIZE USR 64e3
```

When the game has loaded the border will flash, indicating that the computer is waiting for something else to load. Press BREAK and enter POKE 29614,0 for infinite lives and RANDOMIZE USR 25e3 to start the game.

ASTERIX AND THE MAGIC CAULDRON

Just to prove that CRASH reaches the parts other magazines can only dream about, here's a POKE from Manuel Lemos **who lives in Aveiro in Portugal. Type MERGE "" and insert the POKE before the RANDOMIZE USR statement. Restart your *Asterix* tape and you'll have infinite lives.**

TERMINUS POKES

***Terminus* was a** Mastertronic **budget game released a couple of months ago. It was written by** Pete Hargreaves, **author of the monster *Tantalus*.** Jon North **is a fellow who's fast developing a reputation for POKEing anything in sight, and *Terminus* doesn't avoid the treatment. These POKEs will give you infinite lasers and infinite energy. Type MERGE "" and start the tape. The program will stop after the loader with an OK statement. LIST the program and insert these POKES before the RANDOMIZE USR statement. Press RUN and re-start the tape. The game should now load in as normal.**

POKE 45583, 0: POKE 47023, 0

DRAGON'S LAIR POKES

Most people I know can't even get past the spinning disk in this game from Software Projects. Jon North **has obviously had the same trouble in the past because he's devised a useful POKE. Type it into your Spectrum and you'll find that you have infinite lives and the wind doesn't blow. Unfortunately this POKE only works for the duration of the first section – after that you're on your own. If you think this is all fairly useless, there are also some tips this issue to get you through the entire game.**

Type in the routine below and press RUN. Play the *Dragon's Lair* tape from the beginning.

```
10 REM DRAGON'S LAIR BY J NORTH
20 LOAD "" CODE
30 POKE 30772, 205: POKE 30773, 74: POKE 30774, 120
40 FOR f=40794 TO 30803: READ a: POKE f,a: NEXT f
50 RANDOMIZE USR 30720
60 DATA 175, 50, 43, 206, 50, 155, 202, 195, 48, 184
```

DRAGON'S LAIR SOLUTION

Here's the solution to go with this issue's POKE. With a bit of practice you should now be able to get right through the game. Where 'continually' appears in brackets, tap or push repeatedly in the stated direction with your joystick until the movement is carried out by the character.

THE FIRST DISK
The POKE should get you through this tricky first section without much trouble.

SKULL HALLWAY
(Continually) tap forward on the joystick to avoid the skulls. Press the fire button to crush the first hand, and tap forward to avoid the second set of skulls. Press fire to destroy the two hands – one comes from the left, the other from the right. Pull back on the joystick to dodge the bats, and then push right to avoid them (they follow you down the corridor). Push left to elude the slime, then forward to shun it when it comes back again, and finally right to escape from it for the last time.

THE BURNING ROPES
Push up and keep your finger on the fire button until you reach the third stone. Always wait until the rope nearly touches the stone before jumping onto it. When on a rope, swing twice before jumping to the next.

THE WEAPONRY
(Continually) press fire to dispose of the ball and chain. Push left to avoid the jug. Press fire to push the wall back. Push right to dodge the axe and then right again to eschew (LMLWD) the shield. Press fire to push back the other wall. Push left to shirk from another axe. Press fire to dispose of yet another shield. Push forward to elude another axe. Push right to escape from the fireball before you exit.

RAMPS AND GIDDY GOONS
Kill all the goons or you will not be able to jump to the next ramp. The ramps disappear after a while so don't linger.

THE TENTACLE ROOM
(Continually) press fire to dispose of the tentacle from the ceiling. Push left to move away from the tentacle which attacks from the floor, then push forward to evade another. Press fire to dispose of the two tentacles which appear one after another from the ceiling. Push right to move closer to the door, then right again to dodge another tentacle before you exit.

THE SECOND DISK
No POKEs for this one I'm afraid, but it's easier than the first disk anyway. The wind doesn't blow as hard but it gusts for twice as long, and appears at least eight times.

THE DEADLY CHECKERBOARD
Keep jumping onto a square next to a knight, hitting him with your sword each time.

THE DRAGON'S LAIR
Get the treasure if possible. Be careful as you go for the sword – especially at the edge of the cliff. Watch out for Singe's fire. Jump off the ramp and Daphne is yours. She'll probably sigh something like "My Hero . . . ", and dissolve into your arms. I do love a happy ending, sniff . . .

Hope you found some tips or POKEs to help you out this month. Don't forget to get those contributions in for the Tips Supplement **NOW! Tomorrow will be too late!**

Send all mail to the usual address: **HANNAH SMITH, CRASH PLAYING TIPS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.**

Part Four

THE STORY SO FAR fetched: creation's only perfect (not to mention artistically unclad) human being, Tamara Knight, is seeking a star upon which to wish me, a soft-hearted miniature neutron bomb named LOUSE, into a soft-hearted full sized human being of the male persuasion – preferably with some leisure-ware thrown in. Fortunately, we have just escaped from a hellish place called Heaven in the company of a half-Cherokee former-guitarist from the Ike and Tina Turner Band and two short planks named Pinnochio. Unfortunately, we have landed on the planet Alnilam in O'Ryan's belt, where sectarian conflict is about to erupt between some disgustingly bloated oranges called Bygotts, and the local leprechauns. The worst thing of all is that I am now forced to use the oldest science fiction cliche in the history of pulp. It is my duty to inform you that the leprechauns are little green men. How utterly humiliating!

"Bejabers!" says our leprechaun, flinging his crock of gold at the nearest Bygott. "Pleased to meet you, Mr Bejabers." says Tamara, a very polite, but very unworldly young lady. "Ron for yer loife! If de Bygotts foind out yer a Romulan Catlick, they'll skin yer aloive! And me name's Widdy Coolyew, boi de way, pleased ter meecher." Now I happen to know that pacifism is second nature to Bygotts. The trouble is that their first nature is homicidal mania. We make a run for it, but the Bygotts are everywhere, leering and jeering, panting and ranting "Eat up yer greens!" Tamara emits a perfect yelp, and asks what we should do, to which the leprechaun yells, "Don't ask me darlin', ask de bloody Tinkers." A swarm of leprechauns attacks the huge bulk of the nearest giant orange, renting it asunder – but the sunder would rather be purchased outright. (WARNING: the following bit may be offensive to some vegetarians). Shreds of pith are ripped from the living flesh of the orange warriors. The little green men are sprayed with juice and bombarded with pips. Several are so badly injured that they will remain vegetables for the rest of their lives. Many Bygotts are liquidised before our very eyes, crying "King Bully fer ever". Mashed pulp and splattered chlorophyll ooze underfoot. The leprechaun calling himself Widdy Coolyew is cruelly tossed in oil and vinegar, but he manages to shout to Tamara, "Bring me a handful of dat Bygott pith, quick! If de rest of em can see dere leader's dead, dey moight boggeroff."

This is hopeless. I frantically search my data banks for some useful information to get us out of here, but the only suitable reference I have for this planet is "all knowledge is to be gleaned from the Tinkers." The poor little leprechauns are slaughtered. The rich little leprechauns buy their way out of trouble. The Bygotts gather round us, menacing and semi-peeled. It is quite disgusting. Their focus of attention seems to be Tamara, who is still clutching the fibrous tissues of King Bully of Orange, the Chief Bygott, to her bosom. She is unceremoniously dragged from the battlefield, battered to her knees (they prefer meat in batter) and forced head down over the stump of a dead tree. From the midst of the vengeful mob a sinewy blood orange, stripped to the navel, slowly makes its way toward us. It carries a great sword, glinting and spattered with glutinous green essence of leprechaun.

"If she dies, I die, and so does every other living entity hereabouts. At least I can do something constructive for a change."

The executioner's sword is raised above my poor Tamara's beautiful neck. There is absolutely nothing I can do to save her. In a blinding flash of realisation, bred in the wild and released into captivity, I know that I cannot live without her, and more to the point this story will be somewhat redundant without its heroine. So that's it then: only four poxy episodes before Tamara Knight, intergalactic sales-being for the Macdonalds Teleporter Corporation, and the only perfect human being in existence since the mythological robot-goddess Annbrownsmirrah, is about to die. There is only one ludicrously melodramatic thing left for me to do. I will fulfil my destiny. At the moment when this terrible sword decapitates Tamara, and severs her guiltless head from her blameless body, I will detonate myself, and reduce this entire saga to radioactive dust. If she dies, I die, and so does every other living entity hereabouts. At least I can do something constructive for a change.

"Goodbye Louse" says Tamara, in a small, calm, perfect voice. What's good about it!? Death can often be fatal! I hurriedly re-combine my molecules and cease to be a dirty dog tooth in her perfect mouth. It just wouldn't be right for her to die with such a blemish in her chops. Instead, with her perfect saliva still clinging to my unworthy carapace, I transform myself into a little tea-brown birth mark, or should I say ironic death-mark, the back of her neck, just where these miniature black hairs of her nape meets the fluffy down of her spine, just where the sword is aimed for, just as the last terrible command is given and a voice screams the order, "CUT!" Goodbye Tamara, I loved you as much as it is possible for a neutron bomb to love the spirit and flesh of a small but perfectly formed innocent, whose age and IQ both register as sixteen, goodbye, goodbye, goodbye . . . "

"Who IS that girl with the chopper over her head, as the actwess said to the bar steward. She's not in the scwipt . . . "

I prime my detonator, squeeze my trigger, kiss her neck and hear the prissy voice screeching a string of hysterical orders, "Cut! Cut! Cut! Who IS that girl with the chopper over her head, as the actwess said to the bar steward. She's not in the scwipt, is she? We'll have to shoot this WHOLE scene again! Somebody pour me a dwink of milkywilks in a dirty glass, and put some clothes on that stupid girl's extwemities. You there! yes YOU, the little wooden puppet and the half-cherokee guitarist fwom the Ike and Tina Turner Band, scwape up those corpses pwonto, and get the pwops department to bwing me a fwesh batch of those fat orange thingies and lepwechauns to kill. Oh cwipes! What a WOTTEN day; thwee million cwocks of gold over-budget, some girlie wandewing onto the set, a pile of wotting native fleshypoos, and worst of all I've just broken my fingernail!"

Who is this sweaty idiot, dressed up in a safari suit with a silk cravat wilting beneath his chubby pink jowls? Well, whoever he is, Tamara has been saved! My beautiful hostess will live to fight another day! (or in our case, another five minutes). The impedimented idiot seems to be beckoning for Tamara to join him where he sits on a folding canvas chair with 'Sir Dickie Asteroid, Designer-Conflict Director' stitched on the back sequins. I scan my memory banks to remove the negative from this nonsense:

Designer Conflict: in certain sectors of the Galaxy, especially Taurus Excrementus and O'Ryan's Belt, randomised warfare is considered much too dangerous to be left in the hands of politicians, industrialists, the military and the church. In these regions, all conflicts are handled by advertising and marketing agencies. Warring factions are endorsed by competing sportswear companies, package holiday operators, breakfast-food producers, sanitary-ware manufacturers, arms dealers and washing powder corporations, and all proceedings are holovised. The winner of any Designer Conflict is declared as a result of public opinion polls, registered by the operation of the remote-control handset of domestic holovision sets. (NB: certain Designer Conflicts are sponsored by popular game shows, wherein the lucky contestants are able to commit genocide if they can answer a few simple questions – and all on live breakfast holovision).

So that's it . . . the old Vietnam scam! And I am not in the slightest bit surprised to discover that Sir Dickie Asteroid is under contract to none other than Macdonalds' biggest rivals in the whole wide universe, the dreaded Cocacolanisation Corps! They'll grind my Tamara up for lavatory paper if they discover that she is working for the dirty Macs! But before I can warn her, the loathsome Dickie peers at Tamara's bundle of Bygott skins and demands, "What's this load of wubbish, you wuddy wenegade?" Tamara smiles as sweetly as anyone can smile who has just escaped decapitation, bats her eyelids, licks the perfect sweat from her perfect upper lip and answers, "I was just taking the pith to Widdy Coolyew . . . "

"Stunt man, you see this wicked wude wench?' 'Yes, Sir?' 'Well wuddywell STUNT HER!"

"WHAAA?!" screams the offended bladder, "How DARE you widicule me! How DARE you mock my little affliction! You wotter!" Tamara seems puzzled, "What a . . . ?" "You're doing it again you little WOTTER!" "What a what?" "You wotten wuddy wotten wotter!!" Sir Dickie has turned a very fetching shade of purple and puce, and it fetches his entire film crew back onto the battlefield. "Where's my stunt man?!" he bawls. "Here, Sir" snarls the stunt man who resembles a cross between a fork lift truck and another fork lift truck. "Stunt man, you see this wicked wude wench?" "Yes, sir?" "Well wuddywell STUNT HER!"

The moron picks up the execution-sword, swings it at Tamara's terrified body, misses and neatly amputates Sir Dickie Asteroid's left buttock. Your heroine and her companions tiptoe away, leaving the Designer Conflict Director complaining about the stains on his freshly laundered trousers. I nuzzle into the nape of her neck, happy again, and advise her to search for the mysterious Tinkers that little Widdy Coolyew was blathering on about, and whom my data banks endow with so much power. If a Tinker really exists, he might be able to tell us how to wish upon a star. Then we cold stop having these ridiculous adventures, Tamara could visit the toilet and have a bite to eat, and I could be transformed into a soft-hearted full sized human being of the male persuasion, preferably with some leisure-ware thrown in.

It is Pinnochio, riding on the shoulders of Jimminy Cricket aka Jimi Hendrix who moves the plot along not a little. He rubs his forehead in amazement, hurriedly extinguishes the small boy scout fire that spontaneously ignites there, and points to a battered wooden signpost leaning like a crossroad drunk, upon which is carved TO THE TINKERS "Gosh!" says Tamara, "What can it mean?" We all ignore her perfect stupidity, and make our way along an overgrown, twisting pathway, following the sign. We carefully avoid the minefields, quicksand, trip wires, budget software, the snake pits, piranha lakes, bon-



nie langford videos, the rat traps, tiger traps, von trapps, and fall headlong into the first man/woman/ wooden-puppet trap in our path.

We are falling, kicking and screaming into the stinking void. (Well what did you expect? A rest-room to materialise, complete with waitress service and extensive whine list?) As we land, a rest-room materialises, complete with a leprechaun waitress proffering an extensive whine list. My sweet Tamara is overjoyed, but not in the slightest bit surprised, and as we have not eaten for the last three planets, she asks what food is to be had. "Sure dere's no bleedin' meat, but we got plenty of oranges." Tamara lets Pinnochio order for her, and excuses herself for a visit to the toilet. I suppose I too will have to get used to these little human weaknesses after we discover a star upon which to wish me.

When we return from my Hostess' ablutions, Jimi Hendrix and Pinnochio have disappeared. Maybe puppets have to go and have a sawdust or something. "We got some meat now, miss," says the miniature waitress, "noice and fresh if yer don't moind de bits of wood in it." For some reason that I cannot quite explain, a shadow of doubt flits across my printed circuit boards, but no matter. Let's see the whine list. "Can I have some whine, please," Tamara requests. "Sure and whoi not. Yer allowed one whine. Just moan it at der Tinker." Tamara spins around looking for this mythical fount of all knowledge, but fails to spot anyone except the waitress, and a pile of clothing remarkably similar to those worn by Jimi Hendrix and Pinnochio.

I scan the room with my sensors, but there are no other life forms here. "Um, excuse me," says Tamara, "exactly where is this Tinker, and can you tell me where my friends have gone, please?" "Sure yer companions are turnin in dere gravy, and de Tinker is on de table in front of yer. Now if yewl scuse me oi'm bein written out of de plot, cos oi was only included as a sinister female for a bit of sexual equality . . . " and with these obscure words, the leprechaun waitress disappears with a slight odour of chip fat. "Where's the Tinker, Louse? I can't see anything on this table except the whine list." And the whine list says, "Den by a process of logical deduction, I must be de Tinker!"

Well, here's a turn up for the book. The greatest intellect in the entire star system of O'Ryan's Belt is a talking sheet of badly printed A4 paper half blotted out by snail trails from the planet Tippex. "Oi do not talk sheet", says the whine list, mis-reading my mind. Tamara wrinkles her nose, and gathers her thoughts. Not an easy task for her to achieve simultaneously. "Um, hello? Hello? can you tell me why . . . " "STOP!!" I instruct Tamara, before she destroys our only chance of finding the wishing star. "You are only allowed one request, which the Tinker must grant. PLEASE don't waste it Tamara. Think very carefully before you speak." She smiles at the whine list, runs a perfect finger over it and says, "But why do they call you the Tinker?"



"I'll always be a neutron bomb, never a man. What a life!"

Ho hum. So that's it then, our only chance of salvation gone, and I've just realised what those ketchup stains on the tablecloth really are. Poor Jimi. Ah well, nearly at the end of this episode, let's hear what the Tinker has to say and just sit around waiting for the usual crummy crisis. Who cares, I'll always be a neutron bomb, never be a man. What a life! "Dey call me de Tinker," says the Tinker, "because I tink. Therefore I am." You know, sometimes I feel like detonating just for the hell of it. Tamara is sill trying to work out the quotation from the Irish philosopher Des Carthy, when the Tinker pipes up, "Well hurry up den, yer allowed one question each, so let's hearin' from de sentient birth mark on de back of yer neck!" I cannot believe my inputs! It means me! We are saved! Oh bliss! Oh joy! Oh get on with the narrative. I tune one of my outputs to the Tinker's frequency, and ask the vital question, clearly and precisely, "Show us how to get to wish upon a star where all our dreams come true."

The tinker tinks, er, thinks, draws itself up to its full height of 297mm and delivers the answer, the solution to my future happiness with Tamara Knight. "Sure yer eejit, it's not a star yer after. Where you want to be is de planet Astar. Dat's where all yer dreams come true. Youse take the M42 out of Alnilam, keep going, past Castor and Pollux, then . . . ah to hell wid it, Oi'll take yer there meself. Oi bought dis great teleporter booth from a Macdonalds sales rep last Tuesday, and Oi've bin dyin ter troi it out".

Little does the Tinker know that dying is exactly what happens every time a Macdonalds Teleporter sends a copy of its passengers off, and drops the originals through the floor to be made into hamburgers. But who cares about that. Unbelievable happiness and fulfilment is about to be mine, when I am wished into human form as Tamara's consort. She giggles with undiluted pleasure bracing her limbs against the walls of the Tinker's teleporter, to avoid hamburgerhood. We are instantly transported to the planet Astar, and just as instantly left there by the Tinker, who has forgotten to turn the oven off. And good riddance, say I, there's only room for one synthetic superintelligence in this story, and that's me.

And what a beautiful place this is! Much quieter than the idiotic battlefields of Alnilam, much prettier than the hell-on-earth of Heaven, much less pretentious than the high-tech of Amnesia and nowhere near as smelly as Pynkfloid. Astar will become our private Paradise, our very own Barrat podule. "Well, Tamara, what do you think of it so far?" I ask, readying myself for manhood, and trying to decide whether or not to have a small moustache. Tamara hesitates, "I . . . I'm not sure Louse. I've got a funny feeling we should be very careful what we say around here. It feels like the whole planet is listening . . . " "Ha ha!" I cry, "you don't say! You must be kidding . . . you . . . " Whoops, I seem to have been somewhat preoccupied with my future moustache, and my words have had a rather drastic result. No sooner have I spoken, than Tamara's mouth disappears, and she gives birth to two tiny goats. Well hush my mou . . . hngk?

To be continued . . .

1987 PBM MAILBOX



SUPER VORCON WARS

Super Vorcon Wars is, to quote from the precise rulebook, "an enhancement of the long running and popular, computer moderated *Vorcon Wars*." I couldn't have put it better myself: *SVW* is a genuine enhancement of *VW* (which I reviewed in July 1986). The game's features have been broadened and developed – but unfortunately the price has also gone up! **John Nicholson**, founder of VORCON GAMES, released *SVW* to complement, and not to replace the original. The new and improved features of *SVW reflect all that John has learned about the game during his four years of moderation. So, what is so special about SVW?* Is it any better than the original? It is worth the extra 40p per turn? And, most importantly, are its players having fun?

VORCON RE-CAP

As you may or may not remember, *Vorcon Wars* is a sixteen-player game of global strategy and diplomacy – with the ultimate aim of gaining power over a fully circumnavigable semi-developed world. The planet of Vorcon is divided into 'hexes,' each hex having its own function (agriculture, industrial, forest and so on) and longitude/latitude position. These hexes must be captured, and defended by deploying armies about them – thus expanding the amount of world controlled. Diplomacy is often ignored, and battle soon erupts when players meet – and can be anything from a minor skirmish to an all-out nuclear bash.

That, very basically, is *Vorcon Wars. Super Vorcon Wars* is an attempt at improving this masterpiece of simplicity and playability!

THE DIFFERENCES

The basic differences and additional features of *SVW* in comparison to the original are: new land types, revised hex layout, subordinate commanders, spy satellites, running points score (which can grant your commander a Super Commander status – very effectively raising military might), additional options and diseased food supplies. This may not make much sense to non *VW* players, but the rest of you will know what I mean.

HEX

Should you prove super-efficient at stockpiling food supplies for your forces, diseases will become rife – destroying your stockpile very rapidly. To overcome this difficulty, the Laboratory hex has been created: when disease appears, you must set up one of these to discover the antidote. Once the antidote is discovered (at economic expense) and the stockpile has fallen, the problem vanishes and the lab is destroyed. This prevents players from stockpiling so much food that they needn't worry about feeding their armies during battles.

SUBORDINATES

A problem encountered by many in *Vorcon Wars* is the limited range of your commander's effectiveness when moving armies. Your troops can only be moved when within viewing range of your commander (the *VW* equivalent of the Chess King – a very important entity). In *SVW*, subordinate commanders can be created to control a minor campaign on one border while your main commander has an additional print-out sheet. This feature allows a greater use of strategy, yet it could be argued that it de-limits the use of diplomacy (a powerful player with many subordinate commanders has little need to trust in allies).

SPIES IN THE SKY

In the revamped game, satellites can be 're-directed' away from your commander's location to any co-ordinate you choose to spy on – effectively allowing you to keep an eye on the opposition while you temporarily play semi-blind. This switching of orbits cuts down the satellite's life, but it is a useful idea.

OTHERS

Additional options and land hexes exist to accommodate the features covered here. There is certainly more scope for strategy with the use of subordinate commanders and spy satellites, but only time will tell how the game goes down . . .

CONCLUSION

SVW is not necessarily a better game than the original, although if you are looking for a fast turnaround game that has a lot of scope, then it may well be the better option – it's up to you. *SVW* does cost more to play though. *Vorcon Wars* costs £1.00 per turn, while *Super Vorcon Wars* comes in at £1.40 (which can be weekly, fortnightly or every three weeks). If you would like to play in *SVW*, simply post £5.00 to **VORCON GAMES, CRASH Game, Juniper, Bracknell, Berks RG12 4ZG.** This pays for the rulebook, start-up pack (first printout and a world map) plus the first two turns. Cut out the coupon on this page and post it along with the £5.00 start-up payment and you will receive an extra two free turns, bringing the total up to four turns before you start paying anything else! The offer is open until the end of March, so use it while you can!

PBM FORUM

SPORTS

Dear Brendon,
Are there any PBM sport games, other than those based on soccer?
Chris Counsell, Hedge End, Hants

Yup, there certainly are. I shall be covering an American Football game next issue – I've also heard rumours of a cricket game that's under development. I will fill you in on the details should they be forwarded to me. Does anybody know of any amateur non-football sport PBM games?

BK

VERY TIGHT!

Dear Brendon,
After joining *Starglobe* a few months ago, I have been venturing about the globe discovering stars and sending messages. In December's CRASH you wrote that ships with a 'sending messages' score greater than twelve may send tight beam messages. Hmm, I have forty-four points, but have had no indication on my print-outs of this new ability. How exactly do I send these messages?
M Hillman, Slippers Place, London

I'm sorry to say that I shall not give away the 'secret' of tight beam messages. The point to remember when playing Starglobe is that the Mulhollands designed it to be a game of discovery: where's the fun if you are told how to do everything? The best advice I can give you is to experiment with your sending messages order; it is also worth seeing if PRIOR, Main Computer's data banks hold any clues . . . but I have said enough – try it!

BK

A COMPLAINT

Dear Brendon,
Although I find your column both interesting and informative, I would like to complain about your 'overview' of *Saturnalia* in the Christmas Special.

You gave the impression that the game was both boring and mediocre. Your overview hardly touched on the politics of the religions, and on the feuds that go on between them! Not even a mention of the degree of planning and diplomacy that is involved – elements of strategy and war-gaming come in when battles or confrontations are being planned.

Fame is surely what most people aim for; surely calling it multi-player was an understatement. *Saturnalia* has over 1,000 players, and was voted Best Game at the First British PBM Convention!

That concludes my grumble. Thanks for writing such a good column, soon may it spread to four pages!
J Cottrell, Barrington, Cambs

I am sorry that you disagreed with my overview of SLOTH ENTERPRISE*'s* Saturnalia *game – each to his own is what I always say. I based the overview on the feelings passed on to me by readers and friends alike who generally seem to rave about this game; this (to me) appears to be a safe way of writing about a game. Still, your letter has put the record straight. By the way, I personally do not use the PBM Convention Awards as a yardstick for my column's contents as they do not represent a true cross-section of the players' beliefs. The* FLAGSHIP FACTORS *(where available) are the most accurate reflection of a game's quality, and it is these statistics that I try to go by.*

BK

PLEASE

Dear Brendon,
Please, please, please, please, please (etc) ask Lloyd to publish a photo of his typewriter!!!
A Collingwood, Spring Park, Kingsthorpe

Lloyd?

BK

NOT VERY WHITTY

Dear Brendon,
I am a long time CRASH reader

and RPG player. As one of my hobbies being Football, I leapt at the chance of playing **Guy Whitty**'s PBM football game mentioned in your column. After receiving an info sheet, I set Mr Whitty £7.00 to start up and play the game. For reference, my team was named 'Garlic United' (account number C29) – a member of the C-ARLA league. Since sending these details and the cash to Mr Whitty's address I have heard nothing.

Four months ago, I posted him a letter in an attempt to discover why I had heard nothing from him. Please could you help me – have I lost my money, or did I do something wrong?

G Williams, 17 Western Avenue, Brentwood

I have received a number of letters on this subject, and personally I am quite worried about what is happening here. I have written to Guy Whitty but am yet to receive a reply. Is anybody out there actually playing his game? If so, then please write in and tell me. If you are reading, Guy, please either come up with the goods or refund your applicants' credit by cash, postal order or a guaranteed cheque. This matter cannot continue like this for long.

BK

OUT!!!

Dear Brendon,
Has a PBM game GM the right to throw you out of the game, or to stop the game without a refund – even if you are in credit?

C Counsell, Hedge End, Hants

Yes, the GM does have the right to throw players out of his game, if he has good cause to do so (if the player has broken house rules for example). He can also stop running a game without notice (although this is not a very good way to make a company popular). The GM should, by law, offer you a credit refund or transfer – perhaps to another game – so don't worry!

BK

IT'S A SHAME!

Dear Brendon,
Three months ago I wrote enclosing a large SAE, asking for details of *It's a Crime!* as mentioned in the July '86 issue of CRASH. I am yet to receive a reply. Could you please investigate, and send the details requested if possible.

G Burkill, Fitzroy Square, London

I long since forwarded all Crime! applications to KJC GAMES. *Not so long ago, they finally sent out all the requested rule books (so I am informed). I suggest that anybody still waiting should write to:* IT'S A CRIME! START-UPS, Crash OAP Dept, KJC GAMES, 5 Vicarage Avenue, Cleveleys, Lancs FY5 2BD.

BK

That's all for this month's PBM FORUM – keep those letters coming!

LUDLOW DIPLOMATIC DIRECTORY SHROPSHIRE

March is a merry month for marauding maniacs (who are, no doubt, all as mad as a March PBMer . . .). Anyway and anyhow, here lies this month's list of successful candidates for the DIPLOMATIC DIRECTORY . . .

★001 Adrian Neal
48 Marketstead Estate, Kirton, Boston, Lincolnshire PE20 1SL
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 72 & 78; Capitol 15; Earthwood 52; Arcadia 6; Star Empires 1; Conquest*

★002 Jason French
78 Princes Road, Ellacombe, Torquay TQ1 1PA
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 75 (Commander BLITAD)*

★003 Travis Smith
27 Sharmon Crescent, Braunstone Frith, Leicester LE3 6NW.
GAMES: *Starglobe 4 (SS Belle Julie)*

★004 Robert Darbyshire
22 Thornton Gate, Clevleys, Lancs, FY5 1JN
GAMES: *It's A Crime! 1 (Death Warriors); It's A Crime! 4 (Megacity Blues)*

★005 Stuart Millinship
17 Graveney Gardens, Arnold, Nottingham NG5 6QW
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 75 (Commander SHUTUN)*

★006 Mr G G Manganoni
109 Kings Road, Farncombe, Surrey GU7 3UE
GAMES: *Saturnalia; Crasimoff's World; Explorers of Orion; Lands of the Crimson Sun; Aes; Mark of Chaos; Untamed Land; Vesuvian*

★007 Mr C J McCarthy
39A Seaview Road, Liscard, Wallesey, Merseyside L45 4QN
GAMES: *Starglobe 1; Star Empires 1; Vorcon Wars 19; Saturnalia; Fleet Manoeuvres P107*

★008 Scott Macfarlane
2 Broomside Terrace, Costorphine, Edinburgh EH12 7LZ
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 60; Super Vorcon Wars 77*

★009 Paul Davidson
51 Waterloo Road, Prestwick, Ayrshire, Scotland KA9 2AA
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 60 (Commander PEPISH); Arcadia; Conquest*

★010 Kev Wasey
9 Clarkson House, Maysoule Road, Battersea, London SW11 2BP
GAMES: *Earthwood 30*

★011 Ian Hudson
53 Deepmore Close, Alrewas, Nr Burton-upon-Trent, Staffs
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 65 (Commander PESTIB); Super Vorcon Wars 77 (Commander FRUGAD); World of Vengeance (Ian's Invincibles nr Bury St Edmunds)*

★012 Gareth Evans
4 Whitelands Road, Thatcham, Newbury, Berkshire RG13 4AR
GAMES: *Arcadia 6 (Egg Groinside)*

★013 Mike Adams
774 Holmefield Road, Liverpool, Merseyside LK9 3PQ
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars; Conquest; It's A Crime! 4 (Priests)*

★014 David Lane
23 Florence Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham N92 5HR
GAMES: *Casus Belli 5; Player 16*

★015 Martin Higgins
Wallesey Road, Wallesey, Merseyside L44 2AG
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 72; It's A Crime! 4*

★016 Cliff Frost
175 Queens Road, Leicester LE2 3FN
GAMES: *Saturnalia; Arcadia; Earthwood 44; Kings of Steel 17; Arcadia; It's A Crime!; Swords and Shields*

★017 Robin van den Yssel
Smaragdlaan 172, 2332 BX Leideh, Zuid Holland, Netherlands
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 72 (Commander TREBIN); Starglobe 3 (The Dutchman)*

★018 P Brunstan
Cae Mari Pwn House, Thomastown, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan, South Wales
GAMES: *It's A Crime! 2 (Death)*

★019 Steve Vickers
26 Swinton Court, Harrogate HG2 0BB
GAMES: *Soccer Star; Saturnalia; It's A Crime! 4; World of Chaos*

★020 Barnaby Dellar
11 Priory Grove, Stockwell, London SW8 2PD
GAMES: *Starglobe 4*

★021 Stephen Holt
27 Rosemary Road, Sprowston, Norwich, Norfolk NR7 8ER
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 61 (Commander BRIDER); It's A Crime! 4 (Fighting Uruk-Hai)*

★022 Kevin Pack
Walnut Tree Lodge, 9 Kings Meadow Lane, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire NN9 8JE
GAMES: *Earthwood; Saturnalia; Starglobe 4; Orion's Finger; It's A Crime! 3; Casus Belli; Aes*

★023 Matthew Hanson
10 Denby Lane Crescent, Grange Moor, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF4 4EB
GAMES: *Starglobe 4 (SS Obsidian Fox); Arcadia*

★024 Gavin Marshall
36 Spur Road, Orpington, Kent BR6 0QL
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 71*

★025 Owen Whitehead
213 Park Road, Barnsley, S70 1QW
GAMES: *Aes ('Rillion' – E Side), Saturnalia (Grendl of the Web), Enchirodon (Brothers in Arms), It's A Crime (Brothers in Arms), From The Mouth of Hell (Elf), World of Chaos (Rillion Kerr), Soccer Star (Morning Star RS League)*

★026 Damian Manning
12 Warden Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B73 5SB
GAMES: *Starglobe (SS Alvon), It's A Crime (Merry Mob)*

★027 John Preen
12 Underdale Avenue, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 5DY
GAMES: *Starglobe Four (SS Broadsword of the Guild Alliance), Vorcon Wars 78 (Plonog)*

★028 John Kemp
9 Wold View, Caistor, Lincoln, LN7 6UU.
GAMES: *It's A Crime! 4 (New York Assassins), Arcadia 8 (Lord Centaurus at Jihad City, P27)*

★029 Milan Petronic
24 Dell Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B30 2HZ
GAME: *Arcadia 13 (Draug Dur)*

★030 JC Fowler
11 Beaconsfield Place, St Agnes, Cornwall, TR5 0SZ
GAMES: *Starglobe Three, Arcadia 8*

★031 Kevin Edwards
52 Woodlands Road, Irchester, Northants NN9 7BU
GAMES: *Vorcon 60, It's A Crime! 4, City of Strife.*

★032 Jason Cottrell
17 Back Lane, Barrington, Cambs, CB2 5RF
GAMES: *Saturnalia (Axil Taranus), Tyranny (P5)*

★033 Michael R Stannard
44 Harrington Street, Cleethorpes, South Humberside, DN35 7AZ
GAMES: *Arcadia 10 (Mordran the Unknown at Seven Springs City)*

★034Malcolm Sums
76 Mount Road, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1YF
GAMES: *Soccer Star (Kilmore Oilers), Bradley's Football (Houston Oilers)*

★035 Paul Davidson
51 Waterloo Road, Prestwick, Ayrshire, Scotland, KA9 2AA
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 60 (Pepish), Arcadia 7 (Ped at Moriquendi City), Conquest (Anar Narion, maps 18/19)*

★036 S Davies
16 Clara Street, Ton-Pentre, Rhondda, Mid Glam, S. Wales, CF41 7HQ
GAMES: *It's A Crime! 4 (gang 315), Vorcon Wars 64 (Chotub)*

★037 S Wyatt
60 St Andrews Road, Shoeburyness, Essex, SS3 9JJ
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 73 (Prifun), Vorcon Wars 78 (Sathal), It's A Crime! 4 (Mercenaries), Kings of Steel (Woodland Alliance)*

★038 Richard Goff
20 Inglis Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3HU
GAME: *Arcadia 12 (player 17)*

★039 Jason Huggins
35 Garratts Lane, Banstead, Surrey, SM7 2ED
GAME: *Saturnalia (Vetrex)*

So ends another Diplomatic Directory – don't forget to send your applications to our chief Diplomat at:
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S C B P B M D V O T M V E E P K
N I N J A B O O A T Y N E F E G
B T G U N S T A R V H J K G H R
O Z E Y G H X Y E K I P S V B E
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Sometimes I think I'm the only sane one here – they're a right **Wild Bunch** here at the Towers. Take for instance everybody's favourite Girlie Tipster – Hannah Smith. There she stands on the edge of her desk (for some reason she calls it **Gunstar**), shouting at the top of her little girlie voice "I'm at **The Helm**, I'm in control but just gimme my make-up and girlie niff back – pleeeease!" Totally screwy if you ask me . . .

And what about Lee Paddon? ("What about him?" I hear you cry). Anyone who wanders around pretending to be a **Ninja Master**, while **Thrust**ing his face into a Murgi Biryani down at the local Curry House needs to be locked up in a **King's Keep**, and that's for sure.

Without a doubt The Doc Martened One wins the coveted 'Out of his tree' award – the number of times he blows a **Shorts Fuse**! The only cure is to stick him down with the **Spikey** Haired Ones from ZZAP! for a while. But, more often than not, he returns with his **Bootys** hanging from his ears and singing "**Cylu**-ta-ra-de-bum-de-ay!" Maybe that isn't the best solution to cure his **Harvey Headbanger** type fits after all.

Madness doesn't confine itself to the CRASH office – it also finds its way up to the Art Garret where **Olli and Lissa** (his pet airbrush) run riot when a new caseload of stinky orange ink arrives! Poooo-eeeee! Some days I think it would be safer if I worked in a **Gyron Arena** rather than this nut-house.

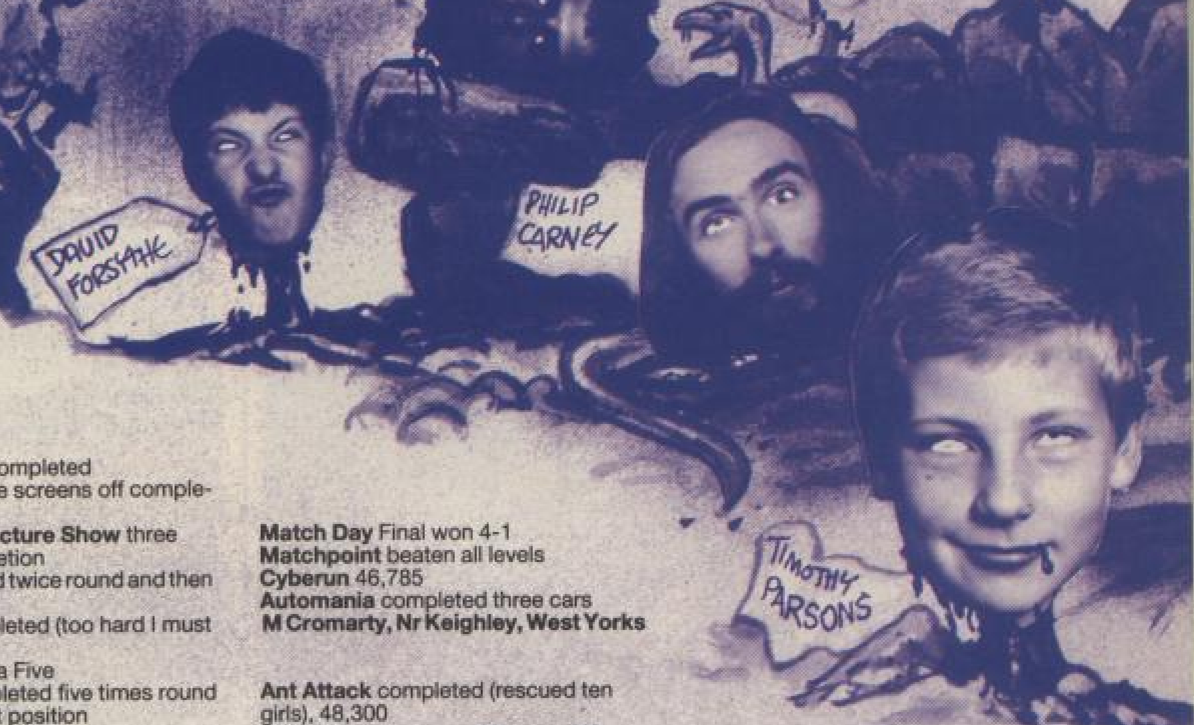
The only time I get some peace and quiet is when I retire to my beloved broom cupboard and play some games. Just recently Cuddly Uncle Dave Carlos has sent me a load of FIREBIRD Silver games that are great fun to play! So, being the kind person that I am, I've set a competition for, you to win every FIREBIRD Silver game ever produced – that's just the first prize: there's also 200 copies of *The Helm* for runners up! Easy-peasy comp – all you have to do is to find all the words marked in bold in my witterings, and locate them in the wordsquare. Sometimes the words (all of which just happen to be game titles) will be split up, for instance, 'Harvey' somewhere and 'Headbanger' somewhere else. When you've found all the titles, cut the wordsquare out (or make a photocopy) and pop it in the post to:

FANATICAL FIREBIRD, CRASH TOWERS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB. All entries must arrive in the broom cupboard by the 26th of March. At least I'm not crazy . . . now, I must be off – It's time to water my Spaghetti plant . . .

Crash Competition

FIREBIRD

Lloyd Mangram's Hall of Slime

Spring is in the air, and snowdrops are sprouting around the foot of the Ludlow gibbet. Soon they will be stained pink as the juice from the squashed tomatoes hurled at miscreants in the stocks splashes upon their petals. All in a day's work in the Slime quarter . . .

Mission Impossible completed
Robin Of The Wood completed
Gunfright completed
Brian Bloodaxe got Crown Jewels
Dynamite Dan completed
Atic Atac completed 100%
Nodes of Yesod completed
Bounder completed
Bobby Bearing completed
Exploding Fist tenth dan (56 times)
Yie Ar Kung Fu completed
Green Beret completed
A J Remic

Ninja Master Green Belt
Jack the Nipper completed
Ghosts 'n' Goblins Ice Palace
Gunfright Jesse James
Spy Hunter 75,000
Danger Mouse in Double Trouble completed three times in a row
Saboteur completed
Yie Ar Kung Fu Stage 25
Match Day won Final 3-2
World Series Baseball beat computer 21-7
Knight Tyme completed
Back to Skool freed bike
Mark Rees, Gwent, South Wales

Jet Set Willy completed
Exploding Fist tenth dan
Dynamite Dan four sticks of dynamite
Jack the Nipper Little Horror
Rambo complete
Commando first gate!
Trans Am four cups
The Wild Bunch three outlaws
Sam Fox Strip Poker all the way! (say no more)
Football Manager won league and FA on level seven
World Cup 10-0 in Final
Match Day 4-3 on International
Philip Carney, Penrith, Cumbria

Paperboy completed
1942 completed
Ghosts 'n' Goblins completed
Glider Rider completed
Great Escape completed
TT Racer completed, first on every course
Universal Hero completed
Heavy on the Magick completed
Kwah! completed
Lord of the Rings completed
Way of the Tiger completed after yonks
Galvan completed
Harrier Attack completed
Mark Cairns, Lisburn, Co Antrim

Yie Ar Kung Fu 208500, Level 40
Yie Ar Kung Fu II completed twice
Shao-Lin's Road temple
Scooby Doo Level Five
Daley Thompson's Decathlon five gold medals
Ghostbusters completed
Tapper second screen
Harrier Attack completed
Hunchback three screens off completion
Rocky Horror Picture Show three pieces off completion
MIKIE completed twice round and then to gym
Breakthru completed (too hard I must say)
Commando Area Five
Bruce Lee completed five times round
Full Throttle first position
Exploding Fist tenth dan
Hypersports been round twice, then got to archery
Green Beret got to end of harbour
Kev Hill

Zoids Great Gorgon
Yie Ar Kung Fu Level 25 or 26
Uridium 40,500,25
Firelord 39,000
Batman completed
Green Beret got to captives
Sabrewulf completed
Combat Lynx 14,500
Saboteur completed Levels One, Two, Three, and Four
Turbo Esprit stopped smugglers, all cities
Starion creator (I admit a tiny cheat there)
Caves of Doom completed
Quest for the Holy Grail completed
Finders Keepers got out
Rockman completed
Action Biker completed
Fighting Warrior reached temple
Movie 47%
David Forsythe, Forest Hill, London

Rocco completed
Pyjamarama completed
Rocky Horror Show completed
Bruce Lee completed four times; 208,400
Jetpac completed
Scooby Doo mad monks
Commando Area Six 128,900
Xevious Area Two 64,600
Back to Skool frog in cup
Dandy all screens from start
Space Harrier Area Six
Robin of Sherwood got sword
Universal Hero completed
Timothy Parsons, Nr Horsham, Sussex

Commando 285,000
Bombjack 262,000
Saboteur completed
Jack the Nipper 50%
Ghosts 'n' Goblins killed second goblin
Rocky Horror completed
Bruce Lee killed wizard three times
Football Manager Division One
Starquake four pieces
Airwolf two scientists
Exploding Fist fifth dan
Match Day Final won 4-1
Matchpoint beaten all levels
Cyberun 46,785
Automania completed three cars
M Cromarty, Nr Keighley, West Yorks

Ant Attack completed (rescued ten girls), 48,300
Atic Atac completed 99%, 52,300
Monty is Innocent completed
Frank Bruno's Boxing beat Peter Perfect in 17.86
Fairlight completed
Match Day won Final 13-0 (five minute halves), 134-0 (45 minute halves)
Saboteur Levels One and Two completed
Knightlore 42%
Gunfright twentieth Bandit £48,300
Skooldaze completed
Back to Skool completed
Kung Fu black belt – level seven
Raid Over Moscow completed
Pyjamarama completed
Steve Davis Snooker 34 break
Robin Of the Wood gained sword
Starquake 20,500 eight pieces of core
Critical Mass completed (all levels)
Ping Pong 52,300 beat Level Five
Way of the Tiger mastered unarmed and pole fighting
Batman six pieces of batcraft
Paul and Ian Franklin, Mansfield, Notts

Three Weeks in Paradise completed 100%
Highway Encounter completed 37,200
Way of the Exploding Fist tenth dan 148,300
Rambo completed 60,020
Frankie Goes to Hollywood 94%
Matchpoint completed (ie won the Final)
Konami's Tennis beaten singles and doubles
World Series Baseball beat computer 90-19 on easy
Yie Ar Kung Fu beaten all baddies
Danger Mouse in Double Trouble completed
Bruce Lee completed 16 times 122,400
Raid Over Moscow completed 211,300
Who Dares Wins II completed 52,690
Spy Hunter 175,160
Movie 0.08 54%
That's the Spirit 98
Barry McGuigan's Boxing beaten Shamrak O'Leary
Paperboy completed 90,900
Rock 'n' Wrestle beaten all wrestlers
Steven Woodward, Harpeden, Herts

Full Throttle first
Way of the Exploding Fist tenth dan
Way of the Tiger completed
Ant Attack completed
Zzoom 640,000
Ace completed
Airwolf four scientists
Fighter Pilot shot down six enemies
Tomahawk finished Mission Two – without loss on Ace level.
Codename Mat completed
T.L.L. four sections completed
Match Day won Final 13-2
Back to Skool nearly completed
Batman one batcar piece needed
Jetpac 220,000 (approx)
Pyramid completed
Chequered Flag Silverstone 1.09.54, Brands Hatch 1.19.64, Monaco, 1.58.56, Micro Drive 1.00.46, Monza 1.09.26, Paul Ricard 1.24.58, Cambridge Ring 55.30.
Mark Batts, Abbots Langley, Herts

Football Manager First Division and won FA Cup
Atic Atac 86%
Commando Area Five
Bruce Lee completed 16 times in one game
Saboteur completed on Level One
Bombjack 115,000 Egypt for the third time
Green Beret end of harbour
3D Starstrike 500,000
Ghostbusters completed second go
Cavelon fourth level
Gavin Threndor, Milton Keynes, Bucks

World Cup completed
Frank Bruno Boxing completed
Atic Atac completed
Paperboy completed
Bruce Lee 101,350
Fist 15,000
Jack the Nipper 35%
Kane 6,006
Kung Fu Master 14,500
Hypersports swimming 26.26, shooting 9100, horse 9.89, archery 3660, overall 156,380
Paul Phillips, Bristol

CRASH BACK

After an absence of over a year, CRASHBACK makes a comeback. Ben Stone takes a look back at yesterday's hits – starting with the top games that appeared in CRASH early in 1985. Issues 12 and 13 come under the Stoney gaze this month, and Ben will be continuing his retrospective reviews throughout this year . . .



Sabreman in evil form – watch out for the spikes

KNIGHT LORE

Producer: Ultimate

A game that needs little in the way of introduction. It was first ever isometric 3D arcade adventure, and two years on, programmers are still producing clones.

The player controls Sabreman, who has to collect charms and take them to a cauldron room. Each room contains traps and problems that require a combination of logical thinking and sharp reflexes to overcome. At night, Sabreman turns into a Werewolf, and if he doesn't complete his quest in forty days and nights, he is doomed to remain a werewolf for ever. Poor little lycanthrope!

Screens: not known, but loads
Special features: filmation, which allows you to do almost anything with the objects in the game
General rating: an outstanding game at the price.

Use of computer	**93%**
Graphics	**97%**
Playability	**97%**
Getting started	**90%**
Addictive qualities	**96%**
Value for money	**93%**
Overall	**94%**

THEN

● *"Any* ULTIMATE *game is a thrill to unpack and load, but with* Knight Lore *they have surpassed themselves. The 3D graphics are so exciting that the fingers are instantly itching to get at the keys. The 3D itself is excellent, with marvellous drawing of the walls and characters. The hidden view idea has been used very cruelly, so that a hint may be given of something nasty crouching behind a stairway – but you're never sure until it's too late. The animation is terrific, from the smallest detail right through to Sabreman himself.* Knight Lore *has that magical ingredient which makes it exciting to play and watch, and keeps you on the edge of your seat with anxiety. IT'S SIMPLY A GREAT GAME."*

NOW

● "*Knight Lore* was, and will probably always be, one of the most magnificent games on the Spectrum. It was the first 3D game to appear. Superior graphics are coupled with magnificent animation and a subtle sprinkling of humour. I remember when it first arrived in the office the whole place stopped dead while we crowded round the screen in awe. As for changing the ratings, I think most of them still stand today. In fact I would be inclined to put the use of computer rating up by a couple of percent, but we don't have that rating any more!"

UNDERWURLDE

Producer: Ultimate

Sabreman is still battling with danger – this time he's trapped in a huge underground labyrinth. The meanies aren't deadly, but bash the little hero about nevertheless. Falling large distances is fatal, and there are a lot of huge drops which may be negotiated by riding bubbles of volcanic gas, or by using a rope to get down and across chasms. Weapons need to be collected in order to get past particularly big meanies, which block strategic parts of the maze.

THEN

● *"*Underwurlde *is certainly no* Atic Atac Part Three *– it's a totally original game that will keep you enthralled for ages.* ULTIMATE'S *graphics need no explanation, but an obvious item missing is the Hall of Fame (but I'm sure the spare bytes from this went to a good cause).* ULTIMATE *have come up with another excellent game. I especially liked the volcanic bubbles on which you can stand and ride, and the eagles which carry you all over the place."*

[illegible] is restricted mostly to 'contact' noises
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 6
Screens: unknown at this time, but loads!
Special features: hyper load
General rating: excellent.

Use of computer	**89%**
Graphics	**95%**
Playability	**96%**
Getting started	**90%**
Addictive qualities	**96%**
Value for money	**86%**
Overall	**92%**

NOW

● "I must have been one of the first people to complete *Underwurlde*. I played it in all my spare time until I reached the end, and what an anti-climax it was too! The game didn't really offer anything new in format but it was very compelling. At the time I think we all overlooked the fact that all in all it was just a big maze game with pretty graphics. There are a lot of games around today which are very similar to this, and many of them involve doing more than just getting out of a maze. The ratings should all be put down to the low eighties or high seventies as the game has dated considerably.



Sabreman goes riding bubbles

BOULDER DASH

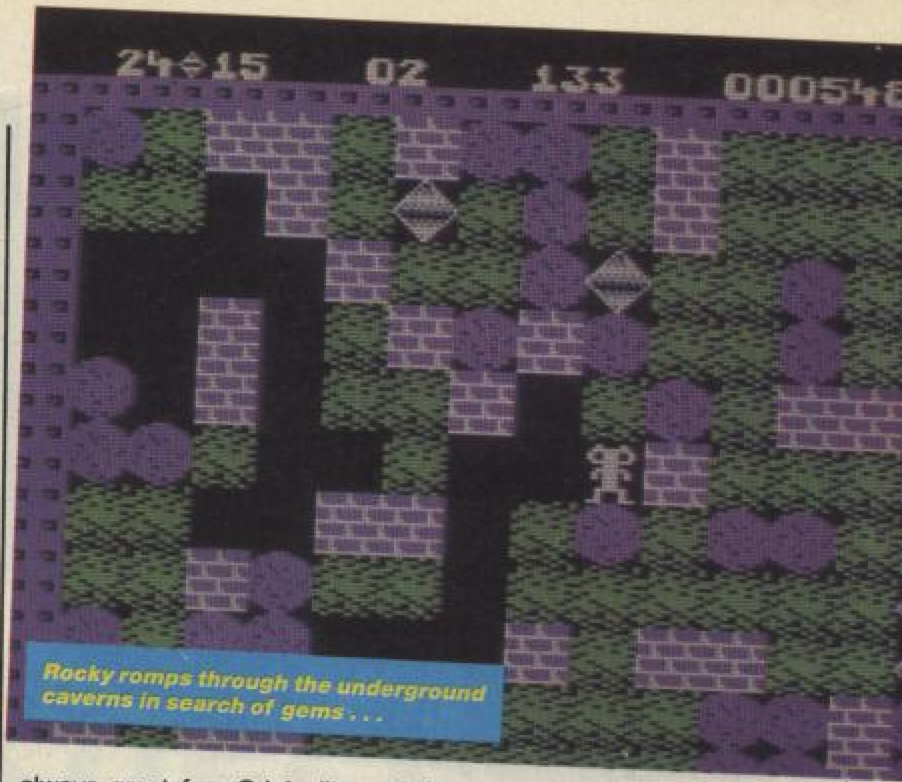
First Star/Monolith

Cute hero Rockford tunnels around 16 different underground mazes collecting gems as he goes. Boulders lie around, and problems are caused when the earth that supports them is tunnelled away – they tumble on Rockford unless he's quick. Nasties chase the hero, and they can only be killed by falling boulders.

Use of computer	91%
Graphics	90%
Playability	98%
Getting started	89%
Addictive qualities	98%
Value for money	90%
Overall	93%

THEN

● *"This amazing game is so simple it's ridiculous! Yet once started it's impossible to leave it. Rockford is amusingly animated, tapping his foot in boredom if you keep him standing still for too long, eyes flicking nervously – as well they might, with all that weight of stone above his head! The movement of boulders and gems is so logical, when huge stacks of them fall it can be a joy to watch. With the five skill levels and 16 screens to play through, this game represents good value even for the slightly high price, and I can recommend it to anyone. It's excellent and tremendously compelling to play."*



Rocky romps through the underground caverns in search of gems . . .

NOW

● "When *Boulder Dash* first appeared in my games collection I couldn't play it enough: solving the puzzles contained in each screen was sometimes infuriating but always great fun. Originality and humour were probably its main points – never before had a game as funny as this been seen on the Spectrum. Today it is still just as compelling and playable, but it seems to have lost a lot of its originality over the years. The ratings at the time were justified in being so high. Now, however, I think that they should all be put down by ten or fifteen percent."

TECHNICIAN TED

Hewson Consultants

Back in the days when *Manic Miner* and *Jet Set Willy* were riding high in the charts, everyone was bringing out platform games. This one had a few innovations which set it apart from the crowd. Technician Ted works in a microchip factory, and has to achieve a variety of tasks during one working day. The routes around the 50 screens that make up the factory are by no means as straightforward as those in *Manic Miner*. Plenty of hazards threaten to drain Ted's energy.

...they go q... ...ough
Screens: about 50
General rating: excellent, and great value for money.

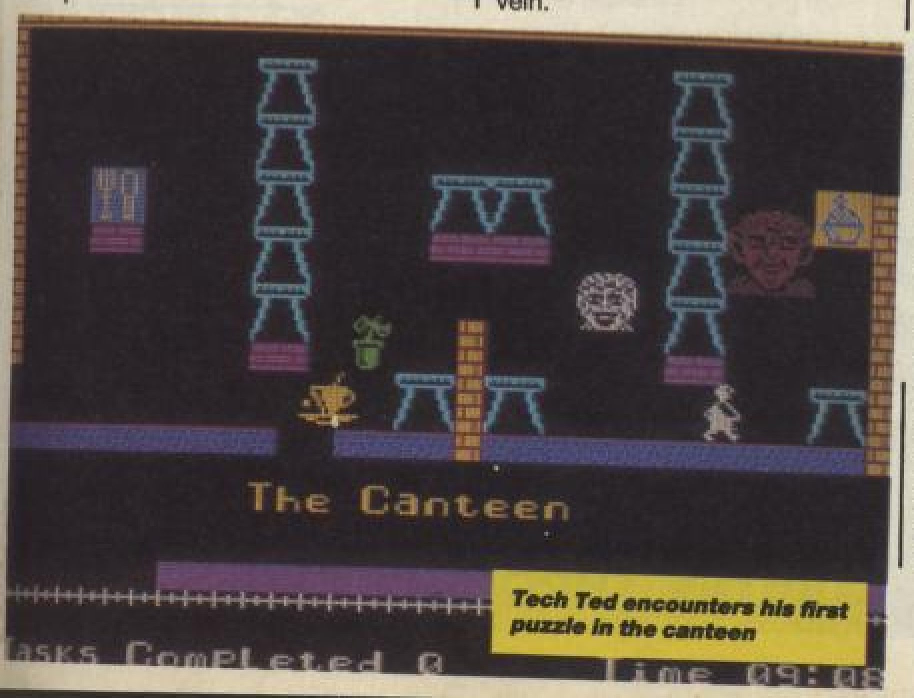
Use of computer	93%
Graphics	96%
Playability	96%
Getting started	92%
Addictive qualities	97%
Value for money	99%
Overall	96%

THEN

● *"The music is the best since Manic Miner, with two tunes played with a 'real' synthesised sound (and equipped with on/off facility if you go mad). The graphics are really wonderful: loads of detail, animation and humour, and the timing routines throughout are perfect, and perfectly hard to beat too. There's nothing new in Technician Ted, but the thought that has gone into it is quite something else. Addictive, delightful to play and a definite must."*

NOW

● "*Technician Ted* had the best loading screen of the year, in fact it was the only thing that really stuck in my mind about it. Looking at it today I can't really see why it was a Smash. It wasn't original at the time; the graphics are bad and the game is pretty dull to play. It shouldn't really have had such high ratings. Ninety-six percent overall for a *Jet Set Willy* variant seems silly nowadays. I'd put all the ratings down into the mid to low sixties as there are still so many games around in a similar vein."



Tech Ted encounters his first puzzle in the canteen

AIRWOLF

Elite

Stringfellow Hawke, helicopter ace and 'nam veteran must pilot the Airwolf through an underground labyrinth, deep bellow the scorched sands of the Arizona desert. Five scientists have been captured, and Airwolf must go in and rescue them.

...addictive, playable and fun, excellent.

Use of computer	85%
Graphics	92%
Playability	91%
Getting started	89%
Addictive qualities	95%
Value for money	90%
Overall	90%



Airwolf penetrates a land installation, and continues to search for the captured scientists

The passages and tunnels are well protected, with defence fields, guns and electric barriers. The helicopter sinks under gravity, so the player must constantly dab the 'up' button to remain airborne.

THEN

● *"Airwolf doesn't need Jan Michael to sell it – the game can do it all by itself. This is one of the meanest arcade shoot 'em ups since they brought Scramble out on the big machines. The pace is violent, furiously fast and will totally destroy your index finger in the process. The game is hard and allows you no respite – you no sooner get through a defence ring and onto another screen with a sigh of relief and NO – it's off again. Thrilling stuff!"*

NOW

● "*Airwolf* was one of the first licensed games on the market, and certainly the best of its day on the Spectrum. It was very good on all counts: nice graphics, cute sound and immensely compelling and infuriating gameplay. I was very surprised at how hard it actually was – some people in the office took more than an hour of continuous play to get past the first two obstacles. Unfortunately after you had mastered all the screens (which didn't take too long as there were only twelve of them) and got all the scientists, there wasn't really any point in playing it again. Today I still think it is a good game, but not quite state of the art. All the ratings should go down into the seventies."

BACKNUMBERS 1986

CRASH ZX SPECTRUM

No 24 Xmas 1985/1986
On The Cover Special – our very own OLIVER FREY occupies five pages. *Starquake* is mapped and there are some *Fairlight* pokes. We profile GARGOYLE GAMES. LLOYD looks back on 1985. ROGER KEAN talks to HEWSON CONSULTANTS. *Spellbound* gets top marks from the reviewers.

No 25 February 1986
DURELL – the profile, and some rather silly photos of the team. A chat with the MICROSPHERE duo. A double dose of JETMAN. GREMLIN GRAPHICS bring a *Ninja* to the Spectrum. TECH NICHE looks at a FORTH add-on and extensions to ZX BASIC. *Zoids* narrowly pips *Sweevo's World* in the reviews.



No 26 March 1986
HUNTER S chats to the Gals from ST BRIDE'S. A first look at the Spectrum 128. What's new on Micronet 800. ROMANTIC ROBOT's *Multiface One* under scrutiny. *Marsport* mega-map and a rather smaller diagram of *Gunfright*. *Three Weeks In Paradise*, *Movie*, and *Winter Games* are SMASHed.

No 27 April 1986
Massive 23 page Playing Tips Supplement – including *Zoids* and *Monty On The Run* maps. 1985 Readers Awards results. MEL CROUCHER interview. IMAGINE resurfaces and PALACE are quick on the draw. Round up of 128K games. A visit to the first Play By Mail convention. *Bomb Jack* wows the reviewers.

No 28 May 1986
Update on the Fanzine scene. MARTECH profile and *Planets* preview. DIY Composite Video Interface. *Spellbound* and *2112AD* mapped. Inside CHEETAH's *SpecDrum*. FRONTLINE Mini-Strategyback. CRASHTIONNAIRE '86 analysis. *Starstrike II* is top SMASH of the month.



No 29 June 1986
First PBM MAILBOX and CRASH GALLERY. *SpecDrum* listing. Homegrown software. HANNAH SMITH chats to REALTIME. Compilations compared. Maps of *Cylu*, *Sir Fred*, *Saboteur* and Parts 1 and 2 of *Tantalus*. The GENESIS, BIRTH OF A GAME feature gets underway.

No 30 July 1986
More CRASH/RAINBIRD gallery. More Homegrown Software. THE BIRTH OF A GAME: some early entries. Mr MINSON meets game designers TIGRESS. LUNA JETMAN returns. *Tantalus*, *Knight Tyme* and *Movie* mapped. *Ghosts And Goblins*, *Jack the Nipper* and *Splitting Images* receive the reviewers acclaim

No 31 August 1986
HANNAH goes wrestling and maps *Pentagram*, *Heavy on the Magick* and *Jack the Nipper* at the same time! A look into the *Dragon's Lair*. Sinclair 'LOKI' myths exploded. ERNIEWARE interview. PETE TAMLYN starts his look at Role Playing Computer games. Wordprocessor round-up.

No 32 September 1986
GAC reviewed. *The Music Box* opened. MIKRO-GEN's DAVE PERRY talks about *Wally* and *Ricky Steele*. Repairing your QUICKSHOT 2. *Dan Dare* arrives! *Bobby Bearing*, *Ghosts and Goblins*, *Core*, *Cyberun* and *Action Reflex* get the cartographic habit.

No 33 October 1986
JON RITMAN – Mr *Batman* and Mr *Match Day* tells all. The GENESIS project: the programming begins. HUNTER S MINSON goes missing! Multi-tracking *SpecDrum*. COSTA PANAYA, the man from VORTEX, interviewed. Maps of *Dan Dare* and *Cauldron II*. First part of *Equinox* and *Dynamite Dan II* maps.

No 34: November 1986
DON PRIESTLEY, creator of *Popeye* and *Trapdoor* interviewed. *Music Machine* reviewed. GAMES DAY report. CHEETAH's *Sound Sampler* sampled. PBM Diplomats Directory opened. GENESIS: *Kat Trap* preview - the Marketing Mix explained. *Equinox* and *Dynamite Dan II* maps completed; *Universal Hero*, and *Hijack* laid bare.

35: December 1986
DAN MALONE, the artist behind *Antiriad* interviewed. RAM ELECTRONICS release a ROM-based wordprocessor. *Glider Rider* and *Lightforce* maps revealed. MIDI interface examined. Spectrum Plus Two problems explained. *The Great Escape* heads a pack of smashes.

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with Philippa Irving



OXFORD BLUES

No doubt the winter will just be a chilly memory when you read this. But as I write the snow is still on the ground and the temperature is still far below zero. This is just the kind of weather where you can whisk yourself away on the wings of imagination to the burning dunes of the *Desert Rats* or the cosy (well, warm at least) depths of a submarine in the *Silent Service*. You don't even need a pair of furry boots and a nice warm college scarf to keep your circulation going and your extremities un-frostbitten while tramping across Icemark thwarting *Doomdark's Revenge*. I much prefer winter – it gives me an excuse to stay indoors with the computer.

Wargames occupy an interesting place in the field of 'computer entertainment' in that they, unlike any other software, resemble a form of non-computer gaming. This puts them in a vulnerable position. I think it's true that most people would rather own a boxed wargame, with fine artwork, a solid playing board, hundreds of little cardboard counters and rules resembling a physics textbook. 'Real' miniature wargaming is something of a separate issue, with its own mystique; computer wargames, or most of them at least, owe their game mechanics to the board wargame.

A traditional board game offers many associated advantages. Already mentioned is the covetous pleasure of ownership; and the simple act of pressing out and sorting of the 2,356 cardboard counters is an afternoon's absorbing entertainment in itself. Not to mention the masochistic delight with which the true wargamer approaches the rulebook. The disadvantages of board wargaming are; the need to spend lots of time playing them, the necessity of finding someone else to play with you, and the inconvenience caused by having to leave the game components set up between sessions. One inspired bound by my cat Gabrielle once sent Napoleon's armies flying spectacularly across Europe!

A computer wargame like *Desert Rats* gets round these problems, and it's obvious that complex board games of this sort are the ideal type of traditional game to be translated literally to computer. But to overcome what's lost in translation, computer strategy games should make more of an effort than we usually see to exploit the unique opportunities for enhancement. Admittedly memory is always going to be working against the game designer, especially on 48K machines such as the Spectrum. I would like to see more thought put into packaging and presentation for a start, and more of the game's 'hidden rules' – the equations determining the outcome of combat, for example – explained. Just because the computer does the work of dice-rolling and modifying, it doesn't mean that the player does not wish to know what is involved.

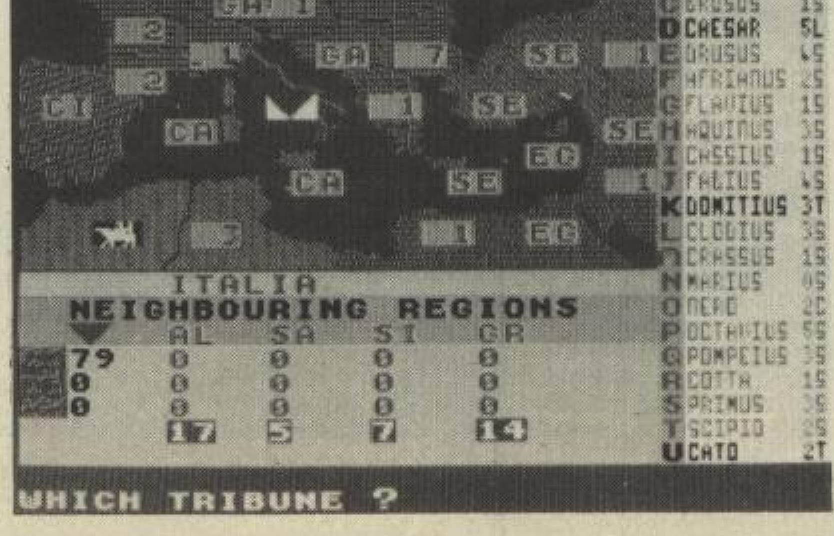
Of course I'm talking about one particular type of computer wargame, and I'm not forgetting that there are other strategy games reviewed in FRONTLINE which belong more in the computer-only camp. But the particular charm of what the computer can do – rolling dice, doing sums and pretending to play a game with you – is ideally suited to merge usefully with the appeal of board wargames. This contrasts with the sheer fallacy of role-playing on a computer, which I find, because of lack of space, I will have to talk about next month.

ANNALS OF ROME

Producer: PSS
Retail Price: **£12.95**
Author: **Rome Software**

Nothing less than the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, managed over several centuries and possibly millenia, is the subject of this unusual game from PSS. The game concentrates on simulating the broad sweep of Rome's military conquests in the early stage of the game, then its struggles to keep control of its captured provinces against native uprising and the increasingly likely threat of civil war. Details of individual battles are not gone into, and military decisions are limited to very broad-based movement of units from one country to another. But the player has control over strategic factors influencing political stability and long-term military success, such as the appointment of legates, tribunes and regional commanders, the setting of the tax rate and the option of bribing the army to remain loyal if a revolt seems to be brewing.

Time to invade one of the four neighbouring regions . . . but who will lead the legions?



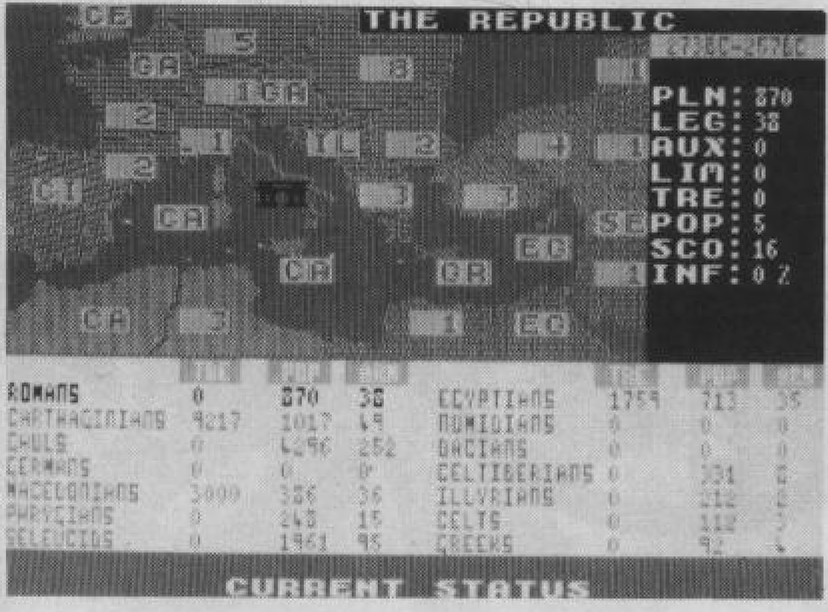
Unlike most other games from PSS, *Annals of Rome* has no arcade element, and does not take place in 'real time'. The enormous time-scales involved would make either of these factors ridiculous, but it must be said that having high BASIC content (and being alarmingly easy to break into – on my copy at least) there are parts of the game which are close to being maddeningly slow. It is the kind of highly strategic, abstract game which may not be too affected by a slow processing speed, but the moderately impatient may find that it detracts from playability.

The main map display shows Europe approximately as it was divided at the time of the Romans, ▶

rather squashed into a corner by two panel displays. I say approximately because of course the political map of Europe changed regularly from 273BC, when the game starts, and as far as I'm aware it's possible to carry on playing *Annals of Rome* indefinitely. This is an unavoidable simplification, but it does typify a flaw in the idea behind the game design. There are twenty-eight states, including Italia itself – which you control from the beginning. Possessions of the other powers are shaded in a pattern distinctive to each race, though there is no index or description of these 'fillings' in the manual. The Romans do not have a pattern, and the visual impression created by this is that the Roman conquest of Europe made the continent look a lot tidier! The countries are not identified by name, unless there is no overall ruling power in the area, but a corresponding map in the manual does the job and prevents the screen becoming too cluttered with information. A symbol on each country shows either the military strength established in the area (if it is over 10,000) or the 'code' of the ruling power. An unnecessary complication arises when you start to conquer territories for yourself; Roman forces are displayed in units of 5,000. An over-large message window below the map throws up information in a computer-controlled fashion. The player has no real control over the sequence of play or the accessing of information, but this doesn't make itself felt; the computer-generated sequence is complicated enough.

The game opens with a series of 'football results', which tell the player which powers predominate (and where) in 'the known world circa 273BC.' A detailed breakdown of each country's population is then given, and this information is updated at the beginning of every turn. Most countries are occupied by more than one race, although in normal circumstances only one has any military strength. Every time an army captures a province it brings with it a small core of its own people, which expands if the occupation prospers, or dwindles away if another power captures the territory. Vestigial remains of former occupations have absolutely no effect on the gameplay – the only thing that really matters is the strength of the native population in a nation's homeland, because for several turns after you capture the territory they will be persistently revolting – but it is an interesting touch of authenticity.

The economics phase which follows requires the player to set the tax rate between One and Two. A high tax rate will increase income (and so provide more money to spend on the army, which increases recruitment – I think) but it will also trigger inflation, shrink your population, and make you unpopular. Once the rate is selected the recruitment figures of that game turn are displayed in a confusing manner, and other facts and figures are updated. This phase is rather badly presented and does not merge smoothly with the main body of the game, partly because it is hard to see how the player's participation affects its outcome.



Humble beginnings – with the strength, wealth and population of the opposing nations listed below the map

By contrast the next strategy phase is fascinating; the player is presented with a list of twenty-one personnel, all of whom start out in Italia as senators. The senators are individually named in a convincing fashion – although historically Romans had three names, not two – and their age is displayed with two figures which denote their ability, which never changes, and their loyalty, which can fluctuate depending on how they are treated. When more than one territory is controlled, the assignment phase enables the player to transport any number of officers all over the empire, and to change the governors of any province which might be a breeding-ground for rebellion. In the later stages of the game the assignment phase is of the highest strategic importance. Officers with good ability ratings are best saved for leading armies into combat, because loyalty is far more important than ability when it comes to choosing governors. If the popularity rating has fallen below zero, effective organisation of the empire has collapsed and the personnel assignment phase no longer occurs.

If a governor does decide to rebel, and more than one may do so at once, he will rampage across the empire – and, mysteriously, across unconquered territory – towards Rome. Rome has the option of mobilising loyal forces in other territories against the advancing rebels, but unless the rebel army is very weak this is usually a waste of resources. When arriving in Italia a battle is fought between the rebels and the loyal army there, and if the rebels win, their leader is proclaimed Dictator and the player thereafter takes his side. Apparently later in the game an Emperor can arise, though I can't say I've got to that stage yet. Civil war is absolutely devastating, because it wastes army resources and leaves hitherto secure territories without any occupying strength.

The longest and most important phase gives you the opportunity to vacuum-clean Europe in the name of Roman imperialism. Unfortunately this is where the game slows down – the manoeuvres of each territory are handled in turn, and the player has to watch while provinces belonging to enemy powers plod laboriously through their moves one by one. There are twenty-eight countries and the player starts off controlling only one of them; that means about five minutes of watching what the rest of the world is doing. Although it's important to be able to see what other races are up to, the execution of this part of the game is clumsy, unprofessional (especially by PSS's standards) and infuriating. Just a little more speed would have added an edge of playability to the combat phase.

When it is Italia's turn at last, the player is presented with information about his own military strength and those in the territories immediately adjacent. You can move troops into any one adjacent territory in an attempt to capture it, or you can choose to do nothing. There are three types of troop: Legionnaires, the excellent fighting units of the Roman army; Auxiliaries, who are non-Romans acting as support for the legionnaires; and Limitanei, fixed garrison troops who cannot be moved. Auxiliaries and Limitanei are recruited from captured territories. The player starts with a number of legionnaires, who, with a combat value of ten, are at a tremendous advantage compared to all the other armies in the ring. An army has to be led by at least one officer, chosen from a displayed list of personnel. Combat with the army in the territory you are intending to capture is resolved immediately, but represents the outcome of a struggle for power that has gone on during the period of years represented by the game turn. Sometimes, but not often, the conflict remains unresolved until the next game turn. If the Roman forces triumph (as they usually do in the early stages), the province comes under the player's control immediately, and if that country has still to have its turn, there is nothing to stop a march onto territories adjacent to it.

The sequence in which the countries move is random, but it determines the structure of play. If, for example, you march 30,000 legionnaires into Alpes in the first turn, whether or not you can proceed to capture Gallia in the same turn depends on whether Alpes has had its turn. It's therefore possible to capture several territories in the first turn, or possibly only one. This artificial limitation is unrealistic, considering that some of the game turns last twenty-five years, there is clearly no reason why troops could not march onwards without restriction if the way is clear. Something of this sort happens in the civil war phase, and although it would have required more thought to make flexible movement work in the combat phase, planning campaigns would have been easier and the game would feel less abstract.

Annals of Rome comes substantially packaged in PSS's usual laudable style, though the cover art is excruciating. And although the instruction manual contains the sort of 'game-mechanics' information that I would like to see more of, it is organised in a most unhelpful manner. Well-written and authoritive background adds immensely to the atmosphere of a wargame, which has after all, to compromise on its on-screen appearance. *Annals of Rome* shows no sign of lack of research or absence of a feel for the historical period, so it is disappointing that the authors don't share their knowledge with us in the manual.

I must say that I like this game very much, despite its faults of presentation and the painful slowness of the combat phase. There is something in the idea of recreating the entire sweep of Roman history that captures the imagination, and vacuuming Europe at the start of the game is very satisfying indeed. But I suspect that later on it becomes impossibly frustrating, as hordes and hordes of technologically advanced Goths and Vandals and Huns steamroll your legions in ridiculous numbers, no matter how well you play. It is a game that ultimately, you can't win.

PRESENTATION 49%
Slow without excuse, and somehow the successive phases feel tacked together.

RULES 60%
Some interesting material in the manual, but it is ill-organised and difficult to consult. There is a lack of historical material.

PLAYABILITY 85%
Despite all that, it is compulsive and fascinating.

AUTHENTICITY 86%
Without question the authors have a deep understanding of the history of Rome, and this is imparted in the feel of the gameplay.

OPPONENT 50%
Other races show a lack of common sense, and will attack against impossible odds. However, because of the nature of the game there is not much scope for intelligent opposition anyway.

VALUE FOR MONEY 75%
While I feel there's a lot of game to be got out of it, £12.95 is too much.

GRAPHICS 70%
Somehow they don't quite work; too elaborate to be called functional, and too messy to be cosmetic.

OVERALL 85%
The sum of this game is greater than its parts and I have to rate it highly.

SILENT SERVICE

Publisher: Micro Prose
Retail Price: **£9.95**
Author: **Sid Meier**

Some wargames take a very long view of their subject matter, covering a campaign taking place over a period of years. Others zoom in a little closer and recreate the strategy of a single battle. At the microscopic end of this spectrum is the 'war machine simulation.' If you think about it, there can't be a more detailed wargame than one which allows you to press the buttons. And *Silent Service*, a submarine simulation set in the Second World War, places itself firmly in the category of wargame simulation. There's not so much mechanical apparatus that the military scenario is obscured, and not so much 'Jap-zapping' that the illusion of authenticity is lost. Conceptually, *Silent Service* has got it just right.

However the implementation falls something short of the promise of the game design. I haven't seen *Silent Service* on other machines, but from playing the Spectrum version I can tell that it has been translated from a Commodore. There's a style of design which shows that this is a too-literal Spectrum 'translation'; chunky graphics, wide spaces, large lettering, joystick fixation. The trouble with such translations is that they tend to look slightly tatty around the Spectrum edges, and *Silent Service* suffers from this.

The quality that is most lacking is atmosphere. There is too much 'number-crunching,' and there's a lack of sound effects - there are a few, but those which exist seem to highlight the deficiency (this is made worse by the long list describing them – for Amstrad owners I suppose). Despite the Spectrum's well-known limitations, I feel that more attention ought to have been paid to sound in a submarine simulation. The silence of the *Silent Service* ceases to be interesting when it's a default mode occasionally interrupted by squeaks and scrapes.

Silent Service is supported by superb instruction, including detailed historical and technical information, and diversifying into maps, diagrams and charts. With a game like this, interesting and informative documentation is extremely important. It's unfortunate that the physical format of the 'manual' is so inconvenient; two of those large sheets of glossy paper which are supposed to be folded fifteen times into the cassette box, and quickly get tatty. In the form of a booklet these instructions would have been a joy to consult, but as it is, it is very difficult to find things. Format aside, the instructions contain descriptions of the multiple stages and scenarios, technical information about the history and 'real-life' use of equipment simulated.

There are three types of scenario; Practice, Convoy Actions and War Patrols. The Practice scenario puts your submarine near the Midway Allied Base, surrounded by a number of empty cargo ships which have been anchored in place so they can't run away. This scenario allows you to learn how to operate the controls of the submarine, and how to aim and fire torpedos effectively. Though this option is mostly useful, the moored ships do have the irritating habit of drifting, making it difficult to keep a good angle on the bow. The Convoy Action scenarios put you in specific historical situations. Somewhere in the Pacific you are faced with a convoy, and you are equipped with a submarine appropriate to the time of the encounter. It is much more difficult to attack a moving, thinking target effectively. Every wargame has a scenario which really counts, in this case it's the War Patrols. This option allows you an initial fifty days of fuel and complete freedom of the South Pacific. By roaming across a large-scale map you have to locate your own convoys and deal with them. The aim is to sink the maximum possible tonnage of Japanese cargo ships.

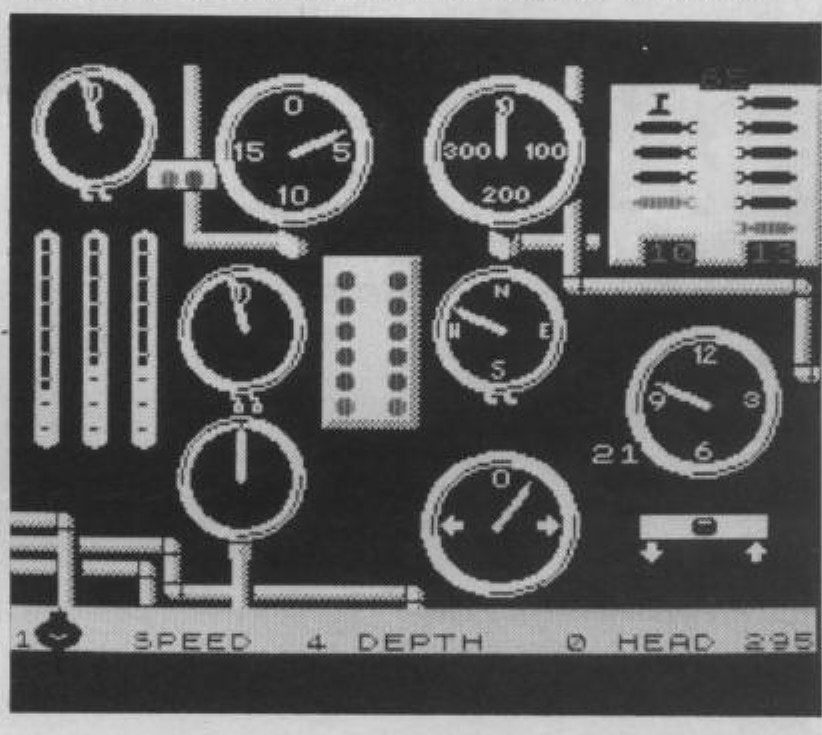
On top of four basic 'skill levels' – Midshipman, Lieutenant, Commander and Captain, difficulty is also controlled by what the game calls 'reality levels.' For example, the player can choose whether or not to have limited visibility, or the possibility of the occasional dud torpedo. Skill levels like this which directly influence gameplay are a good idea, and one of the many satisfying touches of *Silent Service*. On the War Patrol scenario the player also has a choice of historical submarines which, fully described in the instructions, reflect the innovations which were added to submarines as the war progressed.

The first two scenarios merely land the player's submarine at the appropriate location, but the War Patrol opens with a large scale map of the entire South Pacific. There is certainly no shortage of convoys, and finding them is not at all difficult. There is a map to indicate the shipping lanes where the more valuable targets – oil tankers and troop ships – are likely to be found. You can then zoom in on the map to four degrees of magnification, which will eventually show your position relative to the other ships in the vicinity.

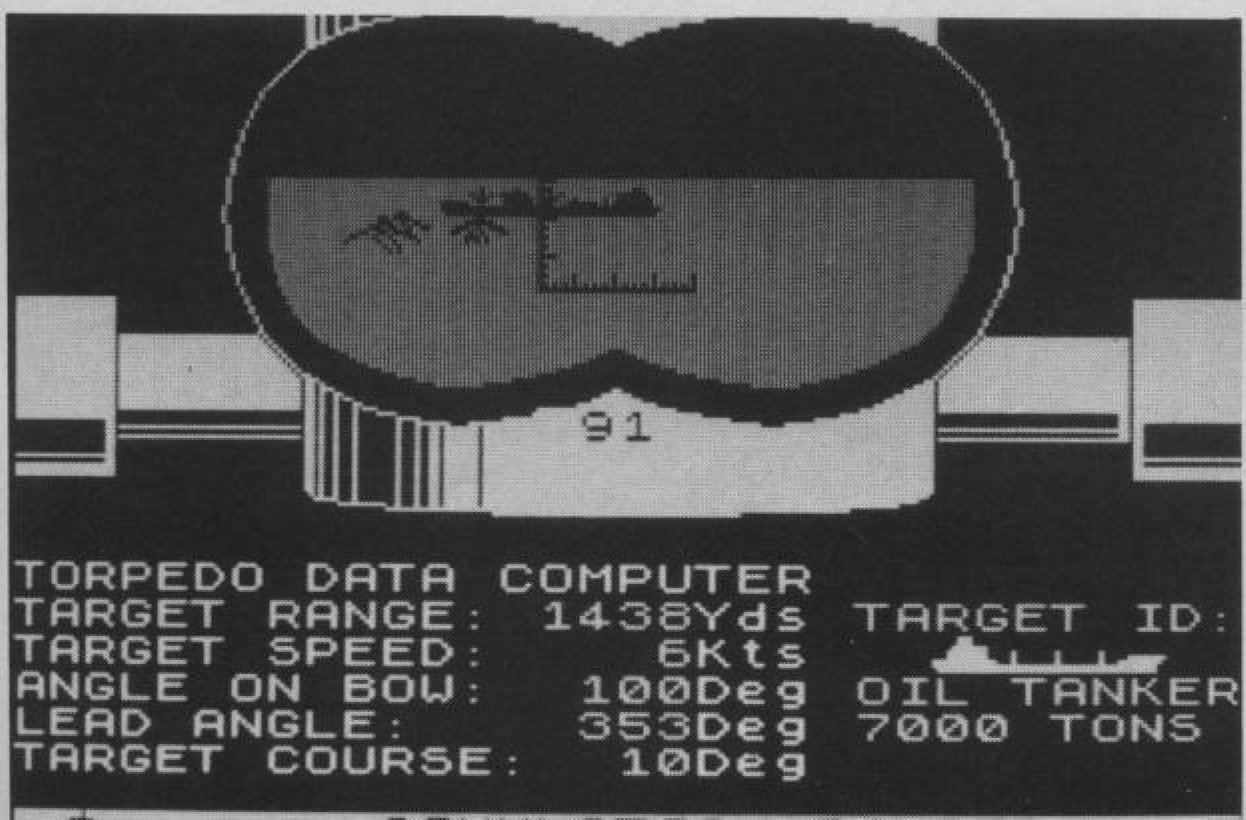
Internal control of the submarine is based around a picture of the conning tower, complete with a picture of a man who I suppose is intended to represent the player. For some reason I found this screen slightly disconcerting. It seems to take away the perspective of immediacy, as if the simulation allows you to leap in and out of your own body. The conning tower screen's main function is to act as a visual menu for joystick control; by moving the man to various positions about the tower, other screens can be selected with the fire button. There are direct key presses to bypass all this if you wish. The game is paused while on the conning tower, so to get things going you have to be doing something else. Climbing a ladder takes you to the bridge screen, which allows a literal view of the surrounding seas and provides information about visibility conditions. You can spot distant ships off the edge of radar range as you sweep around 360 degrees with your binoculars, but on the whole it is safer to do that from inside the ship through the periscope. The periscope can operate up to a depth of 44 feet (if you remember to raise it), and can rotate through 360 degrees – also independent of the submarines's bearing. The periscope screen is vital when it comes to sinking ships, as it identifies targets when they are entered on the periscope's crosshairs, and provides information about the speed, bearing, distance and angle on the bow. Other screens show a panel of instruments relating to the condition of the submarine itself and a damage report.

Manoeuvring and positioning the submarine is not too difficult, being largely a matter of turning the hull by means of the rudders. There is no need to be pointing at targets in order to fire torpedos at them. The periscope crosshairs aim, and a handy device called the torpedo computer calculates a course for the torpedo, based on ▶

A quick scan of the engineering screen indicates that all is well



Only one torpedo on target, but it's enough to cause an oil slick



the speed and bearing of the target. If you wish, you can turn this off and try to do this calculation yourself – though I wouldn't advise taking on this extra difficulty. While I have faith that the program knows what it's doing underneath, the visual confirmation of torpedo strikes is disappointing – and often ambiguous. It is reasonable that some torpedoes which appear to be heading straight for a target don't cause a strike, because it warns in the instructions that there were sometimes faults in the mechanism. But I become cynical when the torpedo appears to shoot neatly past a ship – and then hits it anyway! All hits are accompanied by stunning silence, and a hit to the submarine is indicated by the corny (and distinctly un-submarine-like) device of a flashing margin.

Japanese convoys are accompanied by destroyers. The idea is to attack the destroyers first, then pick off the helpless cargo ships. Unfortunately the convoys tend to scatter when you make your presence known, making the chase frustrating and time-consuming. There is a facility to speed up time – as the designer points out in the instructions, real submarine patrols and encounters could last for hours – but on this version at least, it doesn't seem to work particularly well.

The designers of this simulation have done a good job in fitting an ambitious game environment into a little 48K Spectrum, and to be honest it's hard to find anything wrong either with the idea or implementation. It is certainly an impressive piece of software. And yet, despite being someone who loves simulations of anything (especially with lots of buttons to press and technical detail to back it up), I feel uncompelled by *Silent Service*. This is disappointing, because with just a little tweaking (and extra bytes, I suspect) it could have had that extra something. I'm afraid I'm going to have to close another review wishing for a 128 version . . . no doubt to the irritation of 48K owners.

PRESENTATION 85%
Smooth, apart from a slight Commodore accent . . .

RULES 90%
Wonderful, detailed, atmospheric, informative – etc, but in a most irritating format

PLAYABILITY 70%
Nothing much interrupts the playability, it's just rather dull

AUTHENTICITY 79%
The documentation is excellent but the 'feel' of the simulation, and the lack of sound, detracts

OPPONENT 72%
They act predictably, but are sometimes genuinely menacing

VALUE FOR MONEY 80%
There is a lot in this for your money

GRAPHICS 81%
Attractive, but the enemy ships look weedy and there's the usual simulation 'blank space' syndrome

OVERALL 80%
Professional, impressive and wide in scope



BRIEFING

This is a new section of FRONTLINE which steps on the Girlie Tipster's toes ever so slightly (sorry Hannah). I intend to publish suggested winning strategies for any game likely to be reviewed in this column. I'm starting out this month with tips for *Annals of Rome* hot from a certain Philippa Irving of Oxford, but I'm looking to YOU to send in your own reports from the western front – starting from now!

It's essential to be aggressive right from the start, or your empire won't be large enough by the time the first really tough enemies, the Dacians, arise. Your legionnaries can demolish any of the other races at first, so don't be put off by the size of the Gaulish empire.

A good first move is to capture Alpes with a a large number of men – 30,000 or more. Following that march straight on to Gallia, leaving a minimal force defending Alpes. This cuts off the source of the Gaul's strength, aggressive expansion during the next couple of turns should then eliminate them completely.

During the early stages, never leave Italia defended by less than 20 units, otherwise you're asking for Rome to be sacked.

Leave the capture of Gracea until you are stronger, for the Macedonians are difficult to overcome when they revolt.

Concentrate your forces on homelands, leaving safe provinces under the command of one unit only (as long as they're surrounded by friendly territories).

Always choose loyalty over ability when assigning Governors, and save those of high ability for leading armies into enemy territory. Don't let forces build up too high in any territory, or even the most loyal of commanders may be tempted to rebel.

Never raise the tax rate above One, it isn't worth it as popularity is of prime importance.

Watch out for the Dacians!



WARNING
TOO LATE!
WE WERE ABOUT TO WARN YOU OF THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF...
KRAKOUT
BUT WE MISTIMED IT!
A two way test of skill and nerve – can you out-manoeuvre the awesome ogre and blast a path through the myriad of colourful blocks and on the return, are your reflexes fast enough to retrieve the speeding missile, deflected from its block shattering journey or regurgitated contemptuously from the ogre's mouth.
Graphically brilliant. Compulsively absorbing. At the highest levels your skill and speed must be exceptional.
DON'T LET THAT HAPPEN TO YOU – GET TO IT BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
CBM64/128, Amstrad
TAPE £9.99 DISK £14.99
GREMLIN
Spectrum 48/128k, MSX
TAPE £7.99
Gremlin Graphics Software Ltd., Alpha House, 10 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4DS. Tel: 0742 753423
DANGER: 100 ACTION PACKED SCREENS MEANS THIS GAME IS OVERLOADED WITH FUN!!

TECH NICHE



Franco Frey gets out his SHUGARTS, wonders why ALAN SUGAR hasn't produced a disk system for the Spectrum, and gets to grips with the DISCIPLE – the best thing in terms of disk interfaces since the (now unavailable) OPUS DISCOVERY.

PURE GOSPEL

With the demise of the OPUS Discovery, the Spectrum world has slipped back into a dark and diskless existence. Any hope of upgrading the current cassette-based games market with a user-friendly diskbase format, is quashed by the lack of a standard disk operating system for the Spectrum – or at least one that's properly supported by the original manufacturer. Sir Clive himself originally drove a nail into the Spectrum's coffin by introducing an unsuccessful upgrade in the form of the Microdrive – this time it's good old Alan Sugar who's slipped up, by not providing a disk system with the Spectrum 128K Plus 2. Plans may be afoot, but alas, they're far too late.

Along comes Alan Miles from MILES GORDON TECHNOLOGY to show the big boys what ought to be done, by introducing the *Disciple* – which takes off where the Interface One fell short. Could this be the beginning of the New Testament?

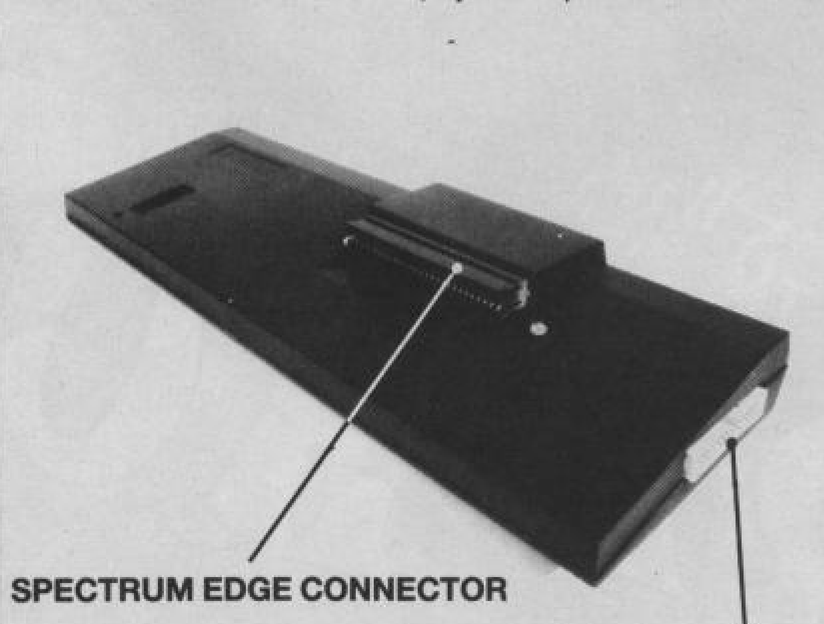
The *Disciple* is everything the Interface One should have been – and more. The multi-purpose interface provides a disk interface for any two SHUGART (SA400) compatible 3 inch, 3.5 inch or 5.25 inch disk drives, a fully supported Centronics printer interface, two joystick ports and a local network system. In fact, most of the things any serious or games playing Spectrum user would love.

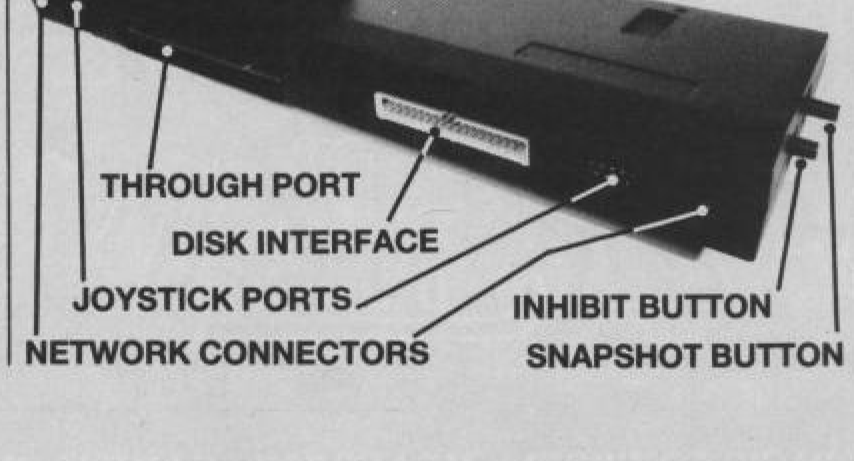
PHYSICAL

The *Disciple* could be mistaken for an over-large Interface One. It plugs into the interface edge connection of the Spectrum and acts as a wedge-shaped support for the keyboard.

DISK HERE, DISK THERE

Any single or double disk drive may be connected to the *Disciple* – as long as it meets with the SHUGART standard 34-way bus. Digging around in the office produced a CUMANA double disk drive for the BBC which worked a treat. The operating system can be configured with the help of a utility provided on cassette. This program enables the user to give all the details of the system, including all the parameters relating to the disk drives including the number of drives, tracks, sides, and the stepping rate in milliseconds. It then goes on to ask about the printer and the networking configuration.





Once satisfied, it formats a disk (in single or double-density format) and saves the system with the new settings. Boot-up from then on is simple.

On booting-up the Spectrum, RUN is performed and the system file is loaded from disk. Ready! The utility may be saved to disk for any future upgrades to the system, and with this done the boring cassette work can be forgotten.

SYNTAX

The operating system is an extension of Sinclair BASIC. To direct the commands to the disk drive, the BASIC command must be followed by a Syntax Operator, which is either D1, D2 or D*, the latter accessing the last drive in use. Typing a capital **D** ensures an automatic display of the catalogue after the command has been performed, otherwise a lower case **d** will suffice. A normal file access could read like this:

LOAD D1 "SAMPLEFILE"

Ex-Microdrive users with the knack for convoluted commands, will be pleased to know that they can continue to use the Microdrive syntax. Apart from the usual LOAD, SAVE and VERIFY, the cassette-based user will have to include such instructions as FORMAT, CAT, ERASE and COPY into their repertoire. FORMAT D1 formats the disk in drive 1 in double-density format, FORMAT SD1 in single-density format. CAT 1 displays a directory of the contents of disk drive 1 in extended form, giving such details as program number (generated by the disk operating system), the filename (up to ten characters long), the number of disk sectors used, the type of file (BASIC, Code, Snapshot, Screen, Microdrive file, Specials, data array or character array) and finally the starting address of the file and the number of bytes used. CAT1! calls up an abbreviated version of the directory.

To save keyboard work, a file can be loaded using the program number designator generated by the directory system. If the 'simple' CODE was number 5, the file can be loaded with a LOAD p5 command.

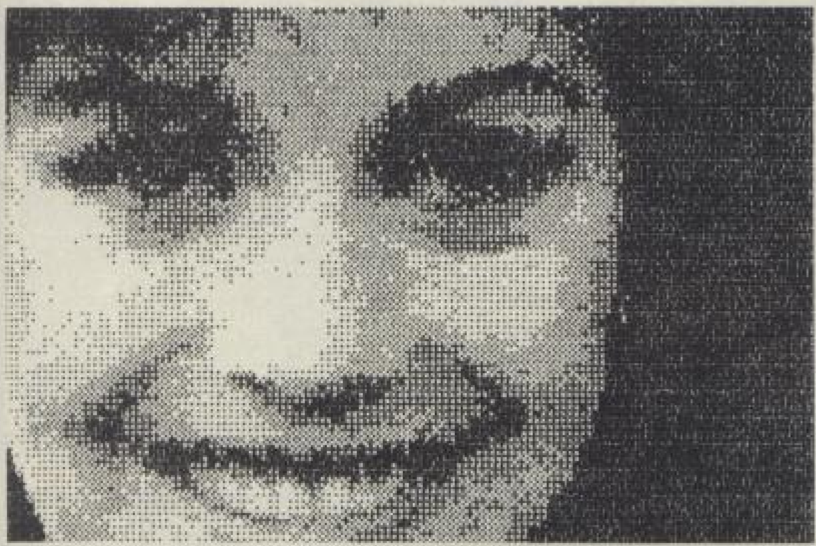
As with any respectable DOS the *Disciple* recognises wild-card filenames. These can contain **?** symbols representing any character and * symbols representing any quantity of characters in the name. ERASE D1 "DEL*" erases any files starting with DEL such as "DELTITLE" or "DEL". ERASE D1 "filename" deletes the file from the disk directory of drive 1. ERASE D1 "name1" TO "name2" renames a file "name1" to "name2". COPY D1 "name1" TO D2 "name2" copies a file from drive 1 to drive 2 and renames it "name2".

The *Disciple* has an auto-load file feature. When booting up the disk system with an initial RUN command, *Disciple* searches on the system disk for a file with the name "Auto-load" and loads and executes it automatically. All that is required is to rename the designated file "Auto-load".

PRETTY PRINTER

The Centronics parallel printer interface on the *Disciple* provides the Spectrum with the choice of dot matrix or daisy-wheel printers – the printer port is fully supported by the system software, and initial configuration is affected via the Utility program. The Spectrum's normal printer channel (ZX printer or ALPHACOM) may be used, or the Centronics port brought into play. The number of line feeds, as well as the number of line spaces before the left hand margin and the graphic characters to be printed for **£** and **?** all have to be specified.

If the printer recognises EPSON type command codes, the system doesn't have to be configured any further, as the operating system uses default values. Otherwise all the necessary printer control codes can be input for printer initialisation, character pitch, line width as number of characters, n/72 inch line spacing, normal line text line spacing, bit image character mode for user defined screen graphics, and any other extra control codes for the printer used. The operating system recognises all the usual Spectrum



Deja Vu! Another paper version of a favourite screen image, this time created with minimal effort with the DISCIPLE

print commands such as LPRINT (including TAB and AT syntax), LLIST and COPY SCREEN$. Experiments with a CANON PW-1156A printer proved immediately successful – to be able to print out a screen dump without messing about with printer control codes was little short of a miracle!

TO SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE

Two network connectors allow Spectrums equipped with *Disciple* to communicate with each other. There are basically two modes available: the Shared Access Network that allows up to 62 users to access the printer and disk drives of the master machine, and the Independent Station Network which provides file access to individual users each equipped with their own disk drives and printer. In each case the system file has to be configured so that the system can recognise whether a station is the master machine, and what the station number of each machine on the network is. If a Shared Access Network is set up, the users only need to input their station number with a FORMAT N9 (for station number 9) command. Sending a file "TEST" to station 9 involves loading it from disk with a LOAD D1 "TEST" command and transmitting it with a SAVE N9 command. N0 specifies a general broadcast, which can be picked up by any station using a LOAD N0 command.

JOYSTICK

Two Atari-compatible joystick ports are available on the *Disciple*. The right-hand port is used for single-player events. If a commercially-produced program asks the user to select Kempston or Sinclair mode, either option may be chosen. The left hand port supports only the Sinclair mode for two player games. The joystick ports do not have to be configured prior to use.

CHEESE PLEASE!

The SNAPSHOT button enables a 'photograph' to be made of the entire Spectrum 48K memory so that the memory contents may be saved to disk. The main use of this facility is the conversion of cassette-based games to disk for 'instant' load. To avoid pirating, a barrier has been set up in the operating system which prevents SNAPSHOT files being copied. At any given point in the game, pressing the button pauses the program and transfers the contents of the memory to disk in a SNAPSHOT file, which may be renamed at a later date. A further function is provided: by pressing CAP SHIFT and the SNAPSHOT button the current screen is dumped to the active printer port – excellent for mapping games!

NO INHIBITIONS

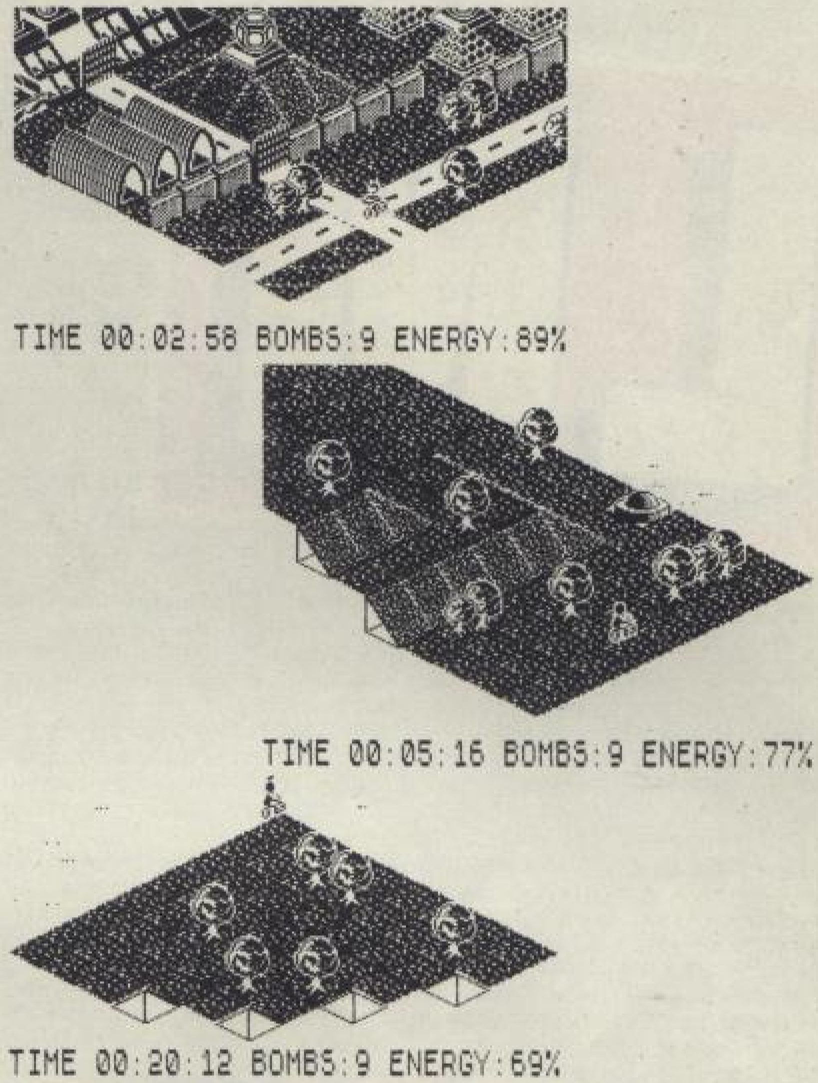
To avoid serious clashes with other peripherals the *Disciple* provides an INHIBIT button which deactivates the operating system and shuts down the disk drives. The system can also be turned off with an OUT 31,0 command, and stays off until an OUT 31,16 command is received. In all cases the printer and joystick ports remain active.

A point to note is that should the Spectrum be reset with the computer's RESET button, the *Disciple* retains the operating system in its memory. So rather than reload the system file from disk, a simple OUT 123,0 reinitiates the operating system.

CAN I HAVE ONE!

The *Disciple* is excellent value for money. It not only offers an extremely versatile disk and printer option for the Spectrum, but also includes the facility to transfer commercial cassette-based software to disk. The manual is concise and informative. The fact that everything works first time (including the dreaded business of dumping screens to the printer) shows that this is a well worked out design. Well done Miles Gordon!

Producer: Rockfort Products, 81 Church Road, London NW4 4DP
Price: **£89.95 inc VAT**
Tel: **01 203 0191**



Mapping GLIDER RIDER made easy, the DISCIPLE way . . .


A Newsfield Publication
Issue Two MARCH 1987
£1
LM
OLIVER REED
THUNDERBIRDS!
PSYCHEDELIC FURS
OUR MAN IN MANCHESTER
WHO'S HAD WHO
ARE YOU A LAD?
MARY WHITEHOUSE TALKS DIRTY
LLOYD MANGRAM TALKS BACK
THE ICEMAN CLIMBETH
GONE WITH NOAKES
REAL-LIFE GHOSTBUSTERS
ROCK ON VIDEO
STATION TO STATION
HUNTER S MINSON HITS THE SWEDES
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WIN A COMMANDO!
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This month Jon Bates looks at a real-time midi recorder, an on-screen editor for the CASIO CZ series of synthesisers, and a new drum kit for the Specdrum. He also answers a few queries about interfaces.

REAL-TIME MULTITRACKER

The *Micon* interface from **XRI SYSTEMS** is an adaptable little fellow, which seemingly can turn its hand (or port) to anything. It was reviewed in these hallowed pages when it was a step-time recorder and now there are plenty of other programs available for it.

As you should know, a real-time recorder turns the Spectrum into a multi-track machine for any midi keyboard. XRI's *Multitracker* program does just that with a reasonable degree of efficiency. It works like this. Anything you play up to 250 bars long, monophonic or polyphonic, is recorded first in a working buffer. You listen to this and decide if it is fitting for your needs, and any minor timing cock-ups can be rounded up by a definable quantization. Having listened to it and ascertained that it is suitable and correct, the section recorded is then allocated a sequence number and name, and transferred to a storage buffer/sequence file.

The next task is to place it in position in the song: this task is carried out on the 'track control' screen. The tracks, all eight of them, are scanned from left to right with track number one at the top of the screen and track number eight at the bottom. Let's assume you have a bass-line already recorded into the sequence file that you want to put on track number one. Move the cursor to the beginning of track one, bar one, and enter 'a' for add : the prompt then asks which sequence number you want. If you can't remember, enter 's' and the sequence file will overlay itself and remind you of their names and number. If all is well, the bars visually fill themselves up (by turning a disgusting shade of yellow) and name themselves with the allotted name of the sequence. Play back and listen – Okay? Then back to the record screen and tell it that you are about to overdub and want to hear track one while you record another sequence. And so on. Mid-flight patch changes are easy enough and have a separate file that allocates a letter to a patch. Just to keep you in order, the working screen for any function always shows the current file-name/song-name in the memory, the amount of memory left, beats per minute and sync status.

After a few hours of doodling around, I realised that to get the best out of this program, you need to concentrate very hard on the way you plan your piece. The recording of a sequence is terminated by entering 'x'. Get this wrong and your sequences will form a useless musical mash – and the only way to fix a duff sequence is to re-record it!

The sequence is only recorded on channel one of midi, so this could mean that as you get further into your piece you have to record and judge the sequence initially on the wrong sound. Once recorded you can allocate the playback to any channel and specify what voice (patch) it will play back with. Individual bars can be inserted, deleted or repeated, but sections cannot be repeated (silly really).

Multitracker will respond to external midi pulses from a drum machine, and it has metronome features which can be designated to any note on the keyboard. This is thoughtful, as some other sequencers play metronome notes that clash horribly with what you are trying to play. It has a Midi Function Cut that enables you to maximise on the memory space, by defaulting on unnecessary midi information: i.e. pitch bend, note velocity, systems exclusive etc – but you do need to know your midi decimal codes. The documentation could have included a copy of the common codes as it would save novices hours of research; most synths have poor documentation in this department.

The version I had did not correspond exactly to its documentation, but I understand that yours will. Virtually anything can be done with the *Multitracker*, but I do have a few reservations, like the lack of a repeat function and track merge. It would have been nice, too, to have a visual edit facility for the working buffer sequence that enabled you to knock out the bum notes and rests to avoid tears and tantrums at the recording stage. But all in all, this is a very comprehensive package.

CASIO CZ EDITOR

If you own a CASIO *CZ Series* synth, another XRI program will allow you to see all the voice parameter information on screen. This is really useful, as editing new sounds of your own creation require an elephantine memory for figures – or else you wear fingers down to stubs on the synth cursor buttons. The eponymous *CZ Editor* will also plot envelope curves for each parameter. Saves lots of time and lets you see what you're doing all the time. There's more. It comes with a voice library bank file. I could never understand why CASIO limited the voice storage to only 16. Even the larger *CZ*'s are very limited on memory compared with their rivals. Mind you I could never understand why they put their synths out with a set of really naff voices that really don't do the thing justice at all. Life is full of mysteries! XRI's library enables you, the happy Spectrum owner, to enjoy 128 voices at any time, sending them to and from the synth individually or in blocks of 16. The whole library can be re-ordered to suit you, like all XRI's gear it is microdrive compatible. For a few more pennies you can buy 100's of new voices for the *CZ* from XRI.

By the way, did you know that the *CZ* can be made to talk in 4 voices at once? You didn't. Well you wouldn't unless you control it from a sequencer. Good fun that.

Both the multitracker and the *CZ Editor* will work only with the MICON interface.

The Multitracker will set you back £38.95, the *CZ Editor* £22.95, and the interface £49.95.

XRI SYSTEMS are at: 10 Sunnybank Road, Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B73 5RE. Tel 021 382 6048.

AFROKIT

Bored with your *Specdrum* sounds. Can't poke any more life into them? Gone listless with the Latin Kit? Not got a sampler, eh? Can't read Simons' programs? CHEETAH proudly present the *Afrokit*. Generate a jungle in your bedroom. Send goodwill messages to the primitive tribes of the Ludlow rain forest (Some day I'll tell you just how primitive some of Mr Kidd's habits are, not to mention The Girlie Tipster's!!). The eight new instruments are:

Trunk: a 'double hit' deep sound, like a soggy gun shot.
Buash(WHAT!!): a high pitched snare drum/rice shaker.
Hi Conga: a good jungle sound.
Lo Conga: like the previous one, excellent stuff for Tarzan soundtracks.
Clave: two bits of wood hit together, authentically hollow.
Coconut: again hollow – like tapping your teeth.
Guiro: Crickets! could find a use in scratch records.
Whistle: Ref's whistle meets high-speed Morris Dancers legs.

The purchase of the *Afrokit* should certainly liven up your percussion tracks, especially at £4.99.

On the reverse of the cassette is the Kit Editor so that you can combine any of the sounds you may have to form new kits, and reverse the sound of any of them. Happy Hunting. CHEETAH are swinging from the liana at: 1 Willowbrook Science Park, Crickhowell Road, St Mellons, Cardiff. Tel. 0222 777337.

And so to your problems . . .
A.C. Kearney writes from Hartfield and wants to know if a Technics Grand, which is a midi-equipped keyboard, can, with a suitable sampler and interface, play any sound he has sampled? Yes, if you buy the RAM/FLARE *Music Machine* which samples and has midi interfaces. Could he add a *Specdrum* to this? Yes, but unless he is using a multi-track machine (see TECHNICHE Nov/Dec 1986) he can't play them together in real time - the *Specdrum* does not synchronise to midi clock pulses but rather to its own. (And he would need two Spectrums). Finally, could he then create sounds without having to sample. Look, what do you want? Blood? Seriously, as a 48K cannot generate lots of wave form, the only way to create via midi is if you can fool around with the internal sound creating routines in the Technics, which are doubtless protected by the simple method of making them not respond to any midi commands, and making no information which the internal addresses available. I think another synth module is the only answer.

Finally, **Frank Bours** writes from Holland wanting to know of any sound programs that will generate realistic drums on his 128. Can anybody help? I have a horrid feeling that it's down to buying a Specdrum and multitracking sound, as I have never heard of anyone having much success with the AY 8912 chip in that department.

COMING SOON

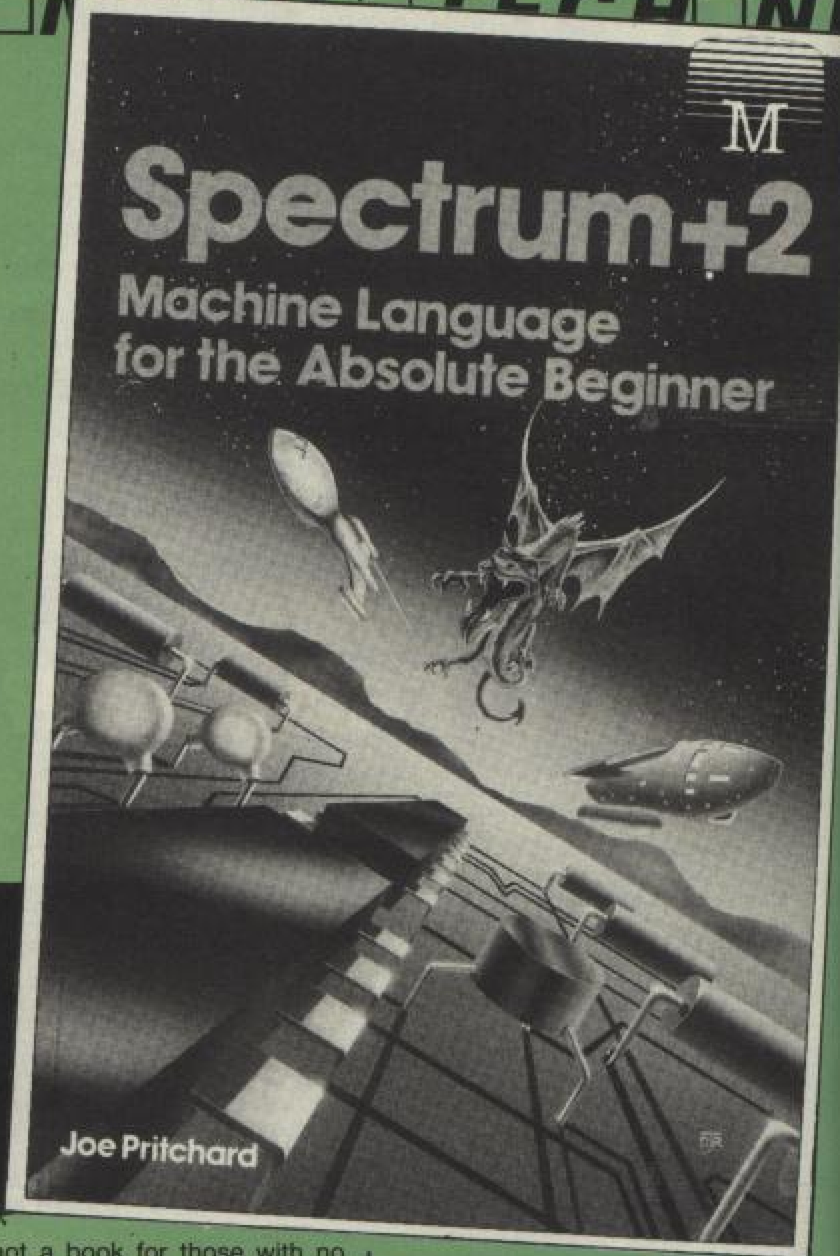
More drum kits for the *Specdrum*, a midi interface with built-in effects at less than £50, details of adding effects to multi-trax without tears of expense, maybe some sound modules and a midi data base for all synths - look forward to your letters, Bye.

JON BATES

TECH TIPS



This month Simon Goodwin sifts through the accumulated post and checks out the first book about Spectrum Plus Two machine code programming.



HAND-MADE MACHINE CODE

The Spectrum manuals explain how to program in BASIC, but tell you next to nothing about machine code – the language used to program most commercial games. This month I've looked at a new book from MELBOURNE HOUSE which promises to teach machine code to the 'absolute beginner'.

Last month I reviewed HISOFT's BASIC compiler – a program that translates BASIC into machine code, the fastest code the Spectrum can handle and the code used for virtually all commercial games. Compilers will speed up BASIC, but they don't let you add much to the language, and – at least on the Z80 – they rarely produce code as quickly or concisely as a human can. So there's still a market for human beings who can write machine-code to order, and anyway it's great fun if you've got time to learn. Machine code programming also teaches you a lot about the 'inner workings' of the computer.

Spectrum Plus Two Machine Language for the Absolute Beginner is the first 'Plus Two' book I've received for review. The publishers say the book will suit experienced Spectrum coders as well as beginners, because it details the special features of the new model. Contrary to the impression given by the title though, this is not a book for those with no programming experience. The introduction says that it is aimed at people who can already program in BASIC. I would not advise anyone to learn machine code as a first computer language.

PRESENTATION

The book is a 190-page paperback, set in fairly large type. The layout and presentation are a bit sloppy, but the binding seems solid and there are few very typos – author **Joe Pritchard** apparently can't spell 'dependent' (but nor could our 'Publishing Executive' until recently!). I could only find one, very minor, typing mistake in one of the program listings. The grammar is below average, even for a programming book, but it is not difficult to work out what the author means. There are a few feeble jokes, and exclamation marks litter the text.

There are 16 chapters, which I split into three sections. The first part introduces the ideas which underlie machine code programming. Then come five chapters that list the 'instructions' which the



Z80 processor can recognise. The last seven chapters are, to my mind, the best in the book – they deal with specific 'concepts' like sound, interrupts, the display, and so on. The one and a half page index is totally inadequate – it doesn't mention the LDIR instruction, or the RS-232 interface, for example.

The first chapter is by far the worst, but luckily it's also the most dispensable. It's a mixture of patronising waffle and a bare minimum of 'hard facts'. Memory is referred to as 'boxes' and registers are called 'hands' and 'feet'. By the end of Chapter One, we know that the computer has a 'CPU' – a two inch piece of black plastic with 40 metal legs – plus a number of 'hands' and 'feet', where two 'hands' equals one 'foot'; a 'foot' has sixteen 'toes' and a 'hand' has 8 fingers! Besides the processor, the computer contains a mysterious 'spike' called a stack, which the CPU can push with two 'hands' – it's a good job most readers will already know what this chapter sets out to explain.

Chapter One is the only part of the book which makes specific reference to the Plus Two – other sections refer to the Spectrum 128, and it seems certain that the book was originally written for users of the original (pre-Amstrad) 128. That doesn't matter much, as the differences between the two are almost entirely cosmetic, from the point of view of the machine code programmer at least. There is one annoying section however, that witters on about 'the EAR and MIC sockets of the tape interface', which don't appear on the Amstrad Spectrum.

The second chapter is a vast improvement – a clear explanation of the 'binary' and 'hexadecimal' numbering systems used by machine code programmers. Binary numbers are printed with a zero at the start to distinguish them from decimal; hexadecimal numbers start with an ampersand when they crop up in the text, but a hash when they appear in programs. According to the text, some values are marked with a trailing 'H', but – thankfully – I couldn't find any of those. Once numbers have been dealt with, the 'background' part of the book ends with a useful chapter about the interrelation between machine code and BASIC.

The next section is quite well-written, but very unimaginatively planned. One chapter introduces all of the Z80's 'registers' and 'addressing modes', then 70 humdrum pages are used to introduce every instruction **ZILOG** the chipmakers own up to. There's no mention of the hundred or so 'undocumented' instructions which work, but are not part of the machine's official specification.

Joe Pritchard follows the manufacturer's reference material faithfully, even though the resultant sequence of instructions makes it hard to write meaningful examples. The information is collected by category, as a processor-designer would see it, so you have to read half-way through the book, past all the complicated and esoteric instructions for shifting, binary coded decimal, logic and so forth before you find out about 'jumps' – the simple, essential machine code equivalents of IF and GO TO!

If you struggle through the strange sequence you'll find that all the instructions are helpfully and accurately described, but the examples are uniformly trivial and do not build on the previous material, arbitrary as it is.

To a great extent, the last sixty pages of the book are its saviour. They consist of seven essays, with examples, dealing with 'real world' subjects. The first essay, on interrupts, gets into a bit of a mess – one paragraph covers more than a page and says that interrupt mode 2 needs a 256 (not 257) byte vector table. The next paragraph runs to three quarters of page, and gets fairly confusing. The information is there – you just get a feeling that the author's grasp of it is not as firm as it might be.

The data about the sound facilities seems complete, but again it is presented in the manufacturer's sequence, rather than as a tutorial. A lot of this information has appeared, in rather condensed form, in recent TECH TIPS columns, but the book is a good source of further information if you still don't know everything about 128 sound and RAM paging that you would like to.

Joe Pritchard documents quite a few machine code routines built in to the Spectrum ROM, but it refers you to another **MELBOURNE HOUSE** book, **Ian Logan**'s *Complete Spectrum ROM disassembly*, for further information. Logan's ROM disassembly is just that – a line-by-line commentary on the code – and doesn't contain enough of an 'overview' to guide a beginner. Yet another **MELBOURNE HOUSE** book, *Understanding Your Spectrum*, does better in this regard, but unfortunately it duplicates a lot of the information in Pritchard's book.

Joe gives you the bare minimum – for instance he explains how to plot individual points on the screen, but not how to draw lines, even though there's a simple routine in the ROM to do that. He tells us how to read individual characters from the keyboard, but not how to read the joystick or check for combinations of keys – vital for games! There's absolutely no information about the second 16K ROM in the Plus 2 – the 'editor' ROM – and nothing about writing to the MIDI and Serial port. These subjects deserve attention: after all, the book sets out to be specific to the Plus Two.

I've made a lot of criticisms of this book, but they should be taken in perspective. *Spectrum Plus Two Machine Language for the Absolute Beginner* contains lots of information, defines all the terms it uses, and is a better-than-average introduction to a complicated subject. It's a shame that it wasn't planned and edited more carefully.

BOX OF TRICKS



SYSTEM 7's handy little reset box in all its glory . . .

If you've always been a bit niggled about the Spectrum's lack of 'frills' – no power switch, no indicator light, and no reset button on early machines – **SYSTEM 7 ELECTRONICS** (664 Analby High Road, Hull, HU3 6UZ) have a low-priced widget that might cheer you up. Their imaginatively-titled 'Reset box' will not send a thrill down any techie's spine, but at £5.50 it's hardly a rip-off and may appeal to some people.

The box measures about 50mm by 75mm, and is about 25mm deep, not counting the bits that stick out of the top. Your Spectrum power lead plugs into one end, and a 50mm cable from the other end goes into the computer's power socket. On the top of the box there's a red power light, an on/off switch and a reset pushbutton. It's neatly and solidly put together, but the on/off switch on my unit did collapse – reasonably enough, when I was stupid enough to put it at the bottom of a holdall filled with CRASH post, and drag the lot around with me for a few days.

TECH TITBITS

128 QUIRKS (at least!)

An anonymous reader has written in to ask how to use the Plus Two's extra memory in a BASIC program. The first point I should make is that ZX BASIC can only handle about 40K of program and data at one time, on any Spectrum version. The easiest way to gain access to the extra RAM on the Plus Two is to split your program or data, loading different programs or arrays from the RAM disk as you go along. The RAM disk works fast enough to prevent annoying delays as the program runs, but you'll probably have to revise the design of your program. If you've got 40K of BASIC already, this is effort is likely to be overdue!

128 SOUND

Fredrik Bergstrom, from Sweden (surprise, surprise!) has got a Spectrum 128 made for the British market, and finds that the sound is not modulated onto the correct channel to work with a Swedish telly. There are two cures for this problem. The first is to replace the modulator – the silver box supporting the TV socket – with a Swedish one. These are cheap, standard components – one firm, ASTEC, makes modulators for almost everyone – and you should be able to get a Swedish sound and vision model from any competent micro repair firm.

It might be possible to 'tweak' the modulator to use a different sound-channel offset, but I wouldn't like to try it without a lot of expensive test gear. The simplest option is to give up on the idea of getting sound and vision from the TV, and to connect a separate amplifier to the sound output on the DIN socket at the back of the 128.

Several readers have reported problems with distortion on the TV sound output of the 128. To some extent this is inevitable, given the simple circuits used and the amount of interference of all kinds floating around inside the machine, but the background noise should be much quieter than the music – no louder than the background hiss on a cheap cassette, for instance. If your machine sounds worse than this, you should compare the TV noise with the output from the SOUND socket at the back of the computer. If this is less noisy, try different TV sets. If the problem persists, but only on TV output, the Plus Two modulator needs to be replaced – otherwise, your TV is at fault.

Some Plus Twos give a lot of background noise from a TV and from the SOUND socket. If so, and if you're willing to invalidate your guarantee, try opening the machine and un-plugging the connector to the cassette player. If this gives a great improvement you can make this modification permanent, without losing the use of the recorder, by putting a switch in the red lead to the tape drive, and only turning it on when you need to use the tape. The rest of the time you should get a clear sound. I should stress that I have not been able to try this, as I can't find a faulty Plus Two to practice on. The idea comes from CHEETAH, whose MK5 keyboard makes heavy use of the sound chip.

128 INFO

Alan Johns has not been paying attention. He wants to know how to redefine characters or disable the BREAK key on a Plus Two. The answer is simple: do it just the same way you would on an older Spectrum. For instance, type POKE 23606,4 to shift the character set up four lines. This makes things pretty hard to read, so you should use POKE 23606,0 to put things back to normal. I've explained how to re-define characters in detail, and explored several ways of disabling Break – with various pros and cons – in CRASH issues from 31 onwards.

A VOLEXING QUESTION

John Marshall has written in to ask if the VOLEX Teletext adapter works with the Plus 2. Search me, John! None of us has got one – not even Franco. Please write to TECH TIPS if you've tried this add-on with a Plus Two, whatever the results, and put other volexers out of their misery.

PLUS TWO PRINTERS

I recently discovered that the ALPHACOM-made Timex 2040 printer will work with the Plus Two; like other ZX-printer emulators it only works in 48K mode, as it doesn't use the serial port which is brought into play in 128 BASIC. Several people want to know how to get Dixon's cheap and cheerful 8056 printer to COPY screens from the 128. In theory this should be possible: the same device is sold in a bundle with the QL, and will print out graphics from the 'Easel' package, with a little prompting. With luck and a following wind (a thermal, of course) I should have the answer next month.

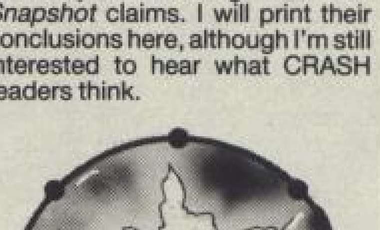
COMPILER RIGHTS

E Cainsell wonders whether royalties have to be paid to the compiler-writer if a program written with a compiler is published. The answer is almost certainly no, although some firms do ask you to contact them before you publish compiled code commercially. Firms have tried to extract royalties under such circumstances, but – frankly – I think this is just 'trying it on'. There are no royalties to be paid on programs compiled with *Zip* or HISOFT *BASIC*, but you must explain in the documentation of your program that it uses 'run-time routines' which are copyright property of the compiler firm. **Pss** say that their agreement with the authors of *MCODER III* requires them to charge 'a one-off fee of £150' if you use the compiler to write a commercial program. I have spent a while trying to contact SOFTEK, without success. OCSS have gone bust, so I suppose you can do what you like with *BLAST* code – that is, if you can get it to work!

DATEL UPDATE

The issue of CRASH containing my appeal for further comments on DATEL's *Snapshot* has only just reached the shops as I write, so I have only received three more comments so far. **Stuart Downing** and **Connor Sadler** have had similar problems to those I found, whereas **Simon Parkinson** has written in to say: "Your out to get DATEL now arnt you" (sic). "I've got nearly everything that DATEL make for the Spectrum (including the *Snapshot*) and they're great, especially the prices."

I'm not out to 'get' anyone, and I've nothing to gain by reviewing any product inaccurately. Apparently the Advertising Standards Authority is 'looking into' the *Snapshot* claims. I will print their conclusions here, although I'm still interested to hear what CRASH readers think.



SPECDRUM and MICRODRIVE

D Wanklin wants to know if it is possible to load and save *SpecDrum* patterns on Microdrive. The short answer is 'no', because the *SpecDrum* software only works with tape – it has deliberately been kept simple, to leave lots of memory for the sampled sounds and your drum patterns. It would be an awful lot of work to convert the software, and you'd have less space for drum patterns afterwards.

However you CAN save patterns with a 'one-press' saving device such as a *Multiface*, and indeed that's what I do to avoid tape loading times. You need quite a lot of Microdrive space, because the *Multiface* will save the program, samples, and drum patterns all at one go. In practice this is quite convenient, as long as you don't need instant access to several full-sized rhythm files.

ELITE JOYSTICK CLASH

Stuart Bone, of Malta, complains that FIREBIRD's *Elite* space-smash won't work with a RAM *Turbo* joystick interface. I spoke to RAM and FIREBIRD, and found, in essence, that both the program and the interface are too clever for their own good! RAM ELECTRONICS explained that their interface generates keyboard and 'Kempston-style' signals simultaneously; this disturbs *Elite*, although it doesn't bother any other programs.

RAM had been selling the *Turbo* for a couple of years when the problem cropped up, but they looked at the design to see if there was an easy cure. There wasn't! FIREBIRD decided not to try to re-work the program, on the grounds that the code was already horribly complicated and would need major changes, and the programmers had been asked to make it work on the 'Spectrum' – not with all the possible add-ons.

RAM eventually made a special adapter, to fit between the *Turbo* and the Spectrum – this disables some *Turbo* facilities so that *Elite* can run properly. The snag is that the adapter needs two expensive edge-connectors and costs £3, even though RAM sell it at cost-price, as a service. If you've already got *Elite* and a *Turbo*, and you really want to be able to use your joystick, this is probably the best solution. If you've already got one product, but not the other, beware!

ENDPIECE

I've still got stacks of letters to answer, and I hope I will have cleared the backlog by the time you read this. I'm afraid that, for a while, I'm going to have to ask you not to send SAEs with your letters because I can't guarantee to give everyone a personal reply. At present I spend more time sorting out correspondence – usually just re-iterating things I've already written in the column – than I do writing for ALL of you, and that's clearly counter-productive for all but the lucky few! That said, I hope you will continue to write in, because I'll continue to offer prizes for good ideas, and to answer as many questions as possible in the magazine. The address hasn't changed: **TECH TIPS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1AQ.**

Sue Townsend

THE GROWING PAINS OF ADRIAN MOLE

PROGRAM BY **LEVEL 9**



Virgin Games presents the computer version of **"The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole."** Based on Sue Townsend's best-selling book, and the popular TV series, the game allows you to help Adrian with day-to-day decisions. It's a text-based game with beautiful illustrations* and your aim is to make Adrian as popular as possible through your answers to multiple-choice questions. This four part game covers 18 months in the life of aspiring intellectual, Adrian, and is available for 7 different computers.

*BBC B version is not illustrated.

Produced by Mosaic Publishing Ltd.

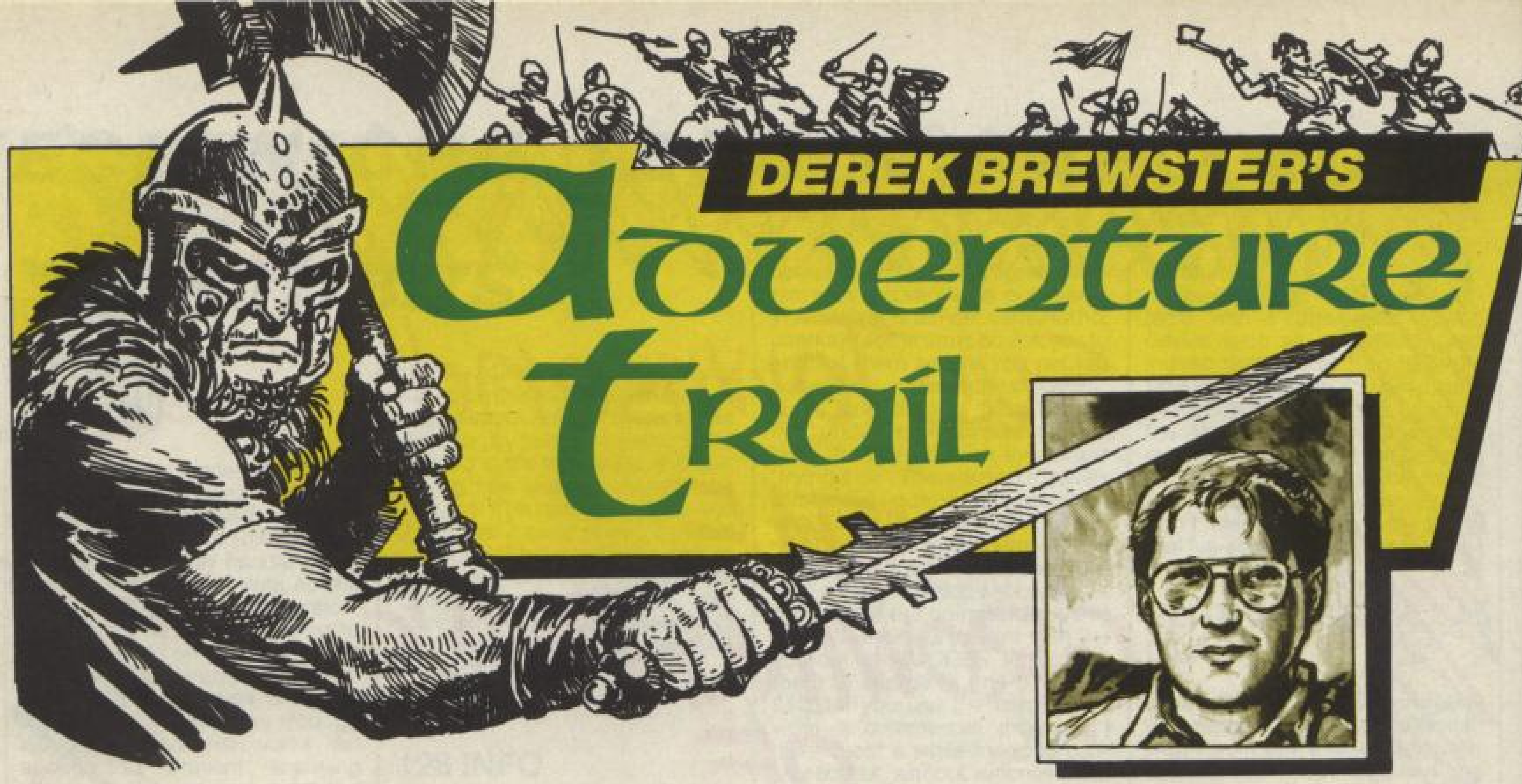
The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole is available from all good software stockists. If you have trouble finding it you can buy directly from Virgin Games. Please **encircle the software you require** and send this tear-off to **Virgin Games Mail Order, 2-4 Vernon Yard, Portobello Road, London W11 2DX.** Make cheques or crossed postal orders payable to Virgin Games Ltd. Please do not post notes or coins.

COMPUTER FORMAT	PRICE	RELEASE DATE
Spectrum 48/128 CASS	£9.95	10 February 1987
Commodore 64/128 CASS	£9.95	10 February 1987
Amstrad CPC CASS	£9.95	10 February 1987
BBC B CASS	£9.95	17 February 1987
MSX 64k CASS	£9.95	17 February 1987
Atari 400/800XL/XE CASS	£9.95	17 February 1987
Amstrad CPC 6128 DISC & PCW 8256/8512 DISC	£14.95	17 February 1987

Name ....

Address ....

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INTO THE NEW YEAR, VALIANTLY . . .

ANYONE who knows anything about adventuring will have heard of **LEVEL 9**. *Jewels of Darkness* was the name given to **RAINBIRD**'s recent release of their three adventure classics wrapped up as one, comprising *Colossal Adventure*, *Adventure Quest* and *Dungeon Adventure*. January should have seen the release of another trilogy, *Silicon Dreams*. This package has *Snowball* (CRASH July 84), *Return to Eden* (Dec 84) and *The Worm in Paradise* (March 86) all together for the very reasonable asking price of £14.95. The package includes a full play-guide plus *Eden Song*, a novella by Peter McBride.

INCENTIVE have just released a Paper Management System in the form of a designer pad which aids the development of *GAC*-produced adventures. Each pad has over 200 double-sided pages of A4, which makes it a rather weighty package, but **INCENTIVE** have agreed to send it out by post for £1.25 – the package itself costs £7.95 so that's £9.20 in all. The address for orders is **INCENTIVE, 2 Minerva House, Calleva Park, Aldermaston, Berks RG7 4QW.**

This month's reviews are made up of *Dodgy Geezers*, a Lever/Jones satire (remember *Hampstead* and *Terrormolinos*?) put out by **MELBOURNE HOUSE**, *Apache Gold* and *Winter Wonderland*, two *GAC* adventures from the firm that gave you the *Graphic Adventure Creator*, **INCENTIVE**, *Landfall on Rollus*, the second **CLWYD ADVENTURE SOFTWARE** game to be reviewed in The Trail (the first was *Futurezoo*), and *Forgotten City*, a game from a new outfit called **HAWK**, which is a very good first release.

Marks given in The Trail have hovered around the eighty mark in recent months, and there is a good reason for this. At one time I liked to review a cross-section of arrivals, but recently I've thrown the poor ones aside and only reviewed the more worthy releases. Perhaps I'll include a 'howler' in the coming months just to balance things up a bit! An interesting-looking *Book of the Dead*, submitted by **THE ESSENTIAL MYTH**, was accompanied by superb playing notes but unfortunately wouldn't load. Any company submitting reasonable quality material to The Trail and wondering why it hasn't appeared would do well to re-submit a copy which is sure to load.

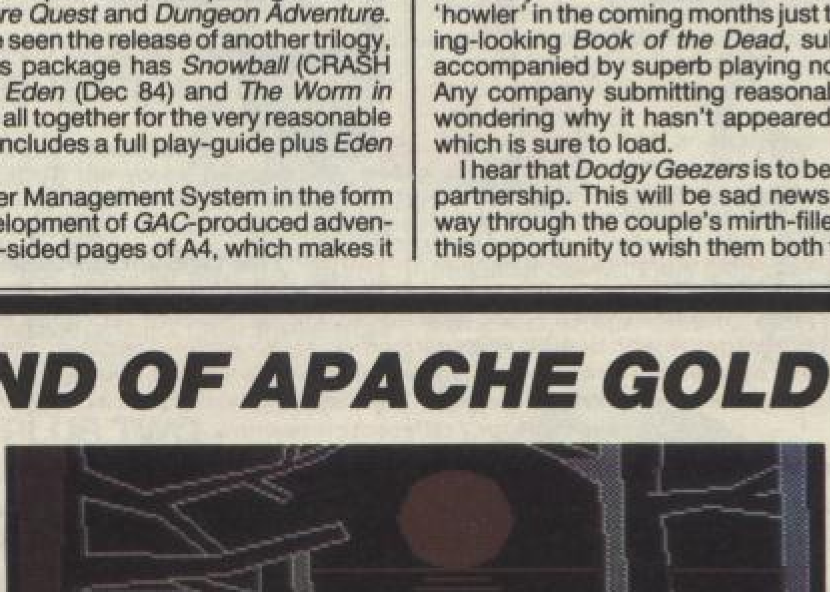
I hear that *Dodgy Geezers* is to be the last release from the Lever/Jones partnership. This will be sad news to all those who have laughed their way through the couple's mirth-filled satires. The Trail would like to take this opportunity to wish them both the best of luck in the future.

THE LEGEND OF APACHE GOLD

Producer: **Incentive**
Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Peter Torrance**

A touch of the old Blazing Saddles and Little Big Man with this, the first **MEDALLION** release from **INCENTIVE** produced with their *Graphic Adventure Creator*. **Peter Torrance** is the chap who *Quill*ed those cheapie classics *Subsunk* and *Seabase Delta* put out by **FIREBIRD**, so it will be interesting to see how he performs with this new adventure medium at full-price level.

It's 2am in the saloon bar of an old west town – known as Skintsville for good reason, as its inhabitants, including yourself, are short of readies. You are Luke Warm, by both name and nature, as you sip on your tenth and last shot of liquor. Through the smoky atmosphere you make out the rotund outlines of some old-timers sitting in the corner, and presently their voices drift over above the din of the bar. "Yep Jake, the legend goes that them pesky indians bury their gold in the grave of their chief. I hear that one of the Apache chiefs has just kicked the bean-can. Only trouble is there are some mighty strange powers at work in their territory . . . " Our chap isn't too keen on the spooky stuff, but is quite excited at the prospect of seeing the glint of gold in his eyes and sets off to find the injun's grave . . .



Groan. Yes – an irritant is spotted as soon as you start playing. Your input begins straight after the end of the location description (and on the same line). This is not altogether untidy, but what makes it worse is the splitting of words between lines. Groan Number Two is the way the program leaves one or two lines of the previous location description on the top of a new location description when the graphics are on (although this seems to be a **GAC** trait). All-in-all, there's a slightly scruffy look to this game. The pictures would be considered quite good for a budget release, but when you get to the dizzy heights of £7.95 they don't look so good.

Loading leads you straight into the first frame, where you find yourself in the back of a wagon on



a wild open plain. This first part is remarkably straightforward, with a brief and cursory examination of what you see quickly leading on to tangible progress. These early problems are just a little too easily solved for anyone other than a beginner. For example, after your inevitable capture by the indians, simply wearing a blanket gives the guard the creeps as he flees what he regards as a great white spirit. "I'm 'um off!" he screams.

Reading the sign on the totem pole reveals that the indians are out to lunch (or more correctly, out hunting it). This gives you time to explore their cosy little settlement, but you'll encounter your first real difficulty in finding out exactly what the somethin' glitterin' atop the totem pole is. All attempts to dislodge said item with the tomahawk or spirit stick from the medicine man's wigwam come to nothing, as did the obvious attempt to chop the pole down. This isn't the only problem to be resolved in this area: getting the canoe under way in the fast flowing river also requires some thought.

Once you get the wagon going again (it had lost a wheel) there is a large area to the east to explore. Picking up all the items on your journey (and you are allowed to carry a considerable number) you are then left in the familiar adventure dilemma – which objects are associated with which problems? Objects I can remember include a spirit stick, tomahawk, a bottle of dirty water, a doctor's medicine cure, a hanging rope, a sack, some dirt, and a squaw's handbag. Problems abound in the east, with a skull on a stick guarding the entrance to a mine, a huge eagle on its nest on top of a rock face, and the painful problem of negotiating the hot desert sand without burning your feet.

The adventure has some fine touches, like when you throw the dirt on the fire which gives off puffs of smoke. Examining the smoke reveals your total lack of understanding of smoke language – "Wish I knew Smoke Code" is the amusing riposte.

The Legend of Apache Gold is an entertaining adventure which is far from difficult. Both experienced players and novices would find much to do and explore in this land of the indians.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: not difficult, easy start
Graphics: reasonable
Presentation: blinding bright white background
Input facility: basically verb/noun
Response: reasonable, not as fast as *Quill*ed games
General rating: good

Atmosphere	88%
Vocabulary	87%
Logic	90%
Addictive quality	89%
Overall	**88%**

DODGY GEEZERS

Producer:
Melbourne House
Price: **£8.95**
Authors: **Lever & Jones**

This one sees itself as a real life adventure, which doesn't mean much until you consider the previous **Lever/Jones** releases: *Hampstead*, which lampooned the desire among many of the capital's residents to move up to the suburb where living in London makes some sense, and *Terrormolinos*, which showed where you'd end up if you couldn't quite make it. Well, with this game here we take a further tumble down the socio-economic ladder, to those who would be on the bottom rung were it not for their ingenuity. In short, these are the folks who got on their bikes and made off with your video recorder.

In *Hampstead*, your task was social advancement from a UB40 to a turbo UB40 (a government-salaried job?), and in many ways this game plays much the same – except that the definition of social advancement here is a much more immediate and tangible concept. Thieving is the usual way of life for these crooks, but the character you control, just released from prison after serving three years for his part in the Long Ditton Spaghetti Caper, is also preoccupied with the little business of dealing with the grass who set him up, and landed him with a two year sentence (he got an extra year for bad behaviour).

The object is to find yourself a nice little earner which will see you alright on the Costa Brava, safe from the prying eyes of Her Majesty's Government. To do this you must first get a gang together – this comprises much of the first part of the adventure. The second part involves the robbery itself, and lets you see how well your selected villains operate 'on the job'.

To be totally honest, my first impressions of this game were not good. The adventure was developed on *The Quill*, and then reprogrammed by **ASHMINSTER COMPUTING**. Departures from the usual *Quill*ed program format include the 'longer than one line' entry, but the game shows no airs and graces by keeping to the R for Redescribe.

Unfortunately, **ASHMINSTER** have not done a good job (with the Spectrum version at least) as the input routine is nothing short of diabolical. Letters get repeated all over the place when a series is entered at normal typing speeds. Even when just putting in one letter for a direction, for example S for South, pressing ENTER gives you another S – this is frustrating enough to introduce a vicar to the delights of blasphemy!

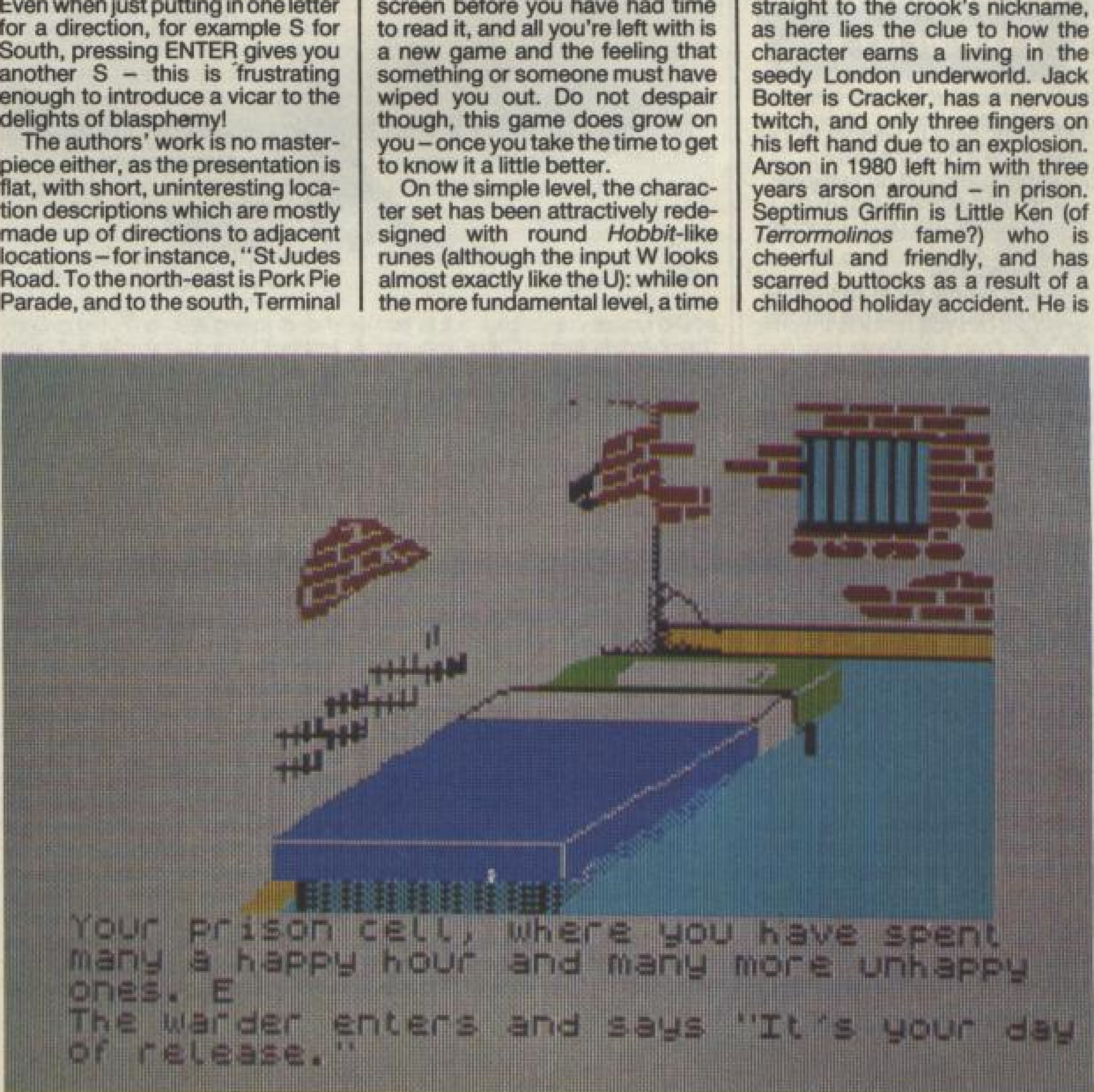
The authors' work is no masterpiece either, as the presentation is flat, with short, uninteresting location descriptions which are mostly made up of directions to adjacent locations – for instance, "St Judes Road. To the north-east is Pork Pie Parade, and to the south, Terminal Street. A winding lane leads southwest." Although such constructions are superb for mapping purposes, they leave something to be desired in terms of creating a riveting atmosphere.

The program can be quite 'out to lunch' at times, with a lack of response that leaves the player cold: RECRUIT GEORGE, CONTACT GEORGE, and KILL GEORGE all give the same reply – absolutely nothing! Surely when you try and kill a guy there should be some sort of response.

Just to round off this whingeing and moaning section, it sometimes happens that a description of some import is whipped off the screen before you have had time to read it, and all you're left with is a new game and the feeling that something or someone must have wiped you out. Do not despair though, this game does grow on you – once you take the time to get to know it a little better.

On the simple level, the character set has been attractively redesigned with round *Hobbit*-like runes (although the input W looks almost exactly like the U): while on the more fundamental level, a time element has been introduced with the HANG ABOUT command – a means of zipping through Friday night and into Saturday morning if you should so wish. One reason why you might want to alter time is to fast forward to when the pubs are open, pubs being a good place to meet dodgy geezers (or so one would have thought – the game isn't quite that easy).

The poster descriptions which can be brought up onto the screen (READ POSTER) are inspired. These give an opportunity to learn more about your peers – and a chance for the Lever/Jones humour to shine through. With these descriptions it's best to go straight to the crook's nickname, as here lies the clue to how the character earns a living in the seedy London underworld. Jack Bolter is Cracker, has a nervous twitch, and only three fingers on his left hand due to an explosion. Arson in 1980 left him with three years arson around – in prison. Septimus Griffin is Little Ken (of *Terrormolinos* fame?) who is cheerful and friendly, and has scarred buttocks as a result of a childhood holiday accident. He is





an experienced cat burglar and suspected of 312 separate thefts of rare cats. But the crook with whom we can have the most sympathy is one Nbedele Jogo (Mr High-Score or Video in the Mr Men parlance) who has highly cultured tastes, a PhD (Cantab) in Computer Science, but who fell foul of the Tax Inspector and unwittingly began a life of crime with a 1980 sentence for tax evasion.

Clearly, *Dodgy Geezers* isn't the best-programmed adventure I've ever played but that isn't really the issue with a Lever/Jones program. Humour is the name of the game here, and this program offers much amusement to those who either just read the cover, or really get to grips with the intricate plot. There's something about the Lever/Jones style that I really appreciate. Take this example from the starting sequence – "Keep your noses clean, your eyes peeled, and your cheques crossed", and this advice on leaving prison – "Since you are a professional criminal, it should be quite obvious that you must find yourself a crime to commit, and a gang to help you commit it." Recruiting the gang isn't so easy as you must first prove your worth as a leader by negotiating the various intrigues of the underworld. A question which will most certainly exercise your mind on your travels is . . . just who is the guy in the white Gucci shoes who seems to lurk in every shadow and doorway?

COMMENTS

Difficulty: easy to wander, not so easy to be a dodgy geezer
Graphics: few and far between; mainly mug-shots in first part
Input facility: AND and IT accommodated
Response: fast
General rating: more interesting the more you play and get into the theme

Atmosphere	**79%**
Vocabulary	**88%**
Logic	**86%**
Addictive quality	**85%**
Overall	**86%**

WINTER WONDERLAND

Producer: **Incentive**
Price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Tim Walsha & Simon Lipscomb**

Let's say straight away that I liked this one. It's the second release from INCENTIVE's MEDALLION label, and deals with a theme which should be familiar – even to those who aren't off on one of those Easter skiing expeditions. The program is well-proportioned and nicely balanced, both in terms of story and difficulty.

You begin, standing by your crashed Cessna light aircraft in the snow-covered Himalayas, but how did you get there? That's a long story.

Having studied and practised anthropology (bothering people, to you) for over ten years, you had all but given up on your dreams of making some great discovery that would put your name in the anthropology books. That is, until you received a Telex from your Russian Archeologist friend, Sergio Kirov, currently working in Tibet. His message related his discovery of a civilisation as advanced as Mankind, yet totally independent of it. Sergio requests you leave for Tibet immediately, to give the kind of advice which has given you the title of the man who takes the apology out of anthropology.

Sergio is nowhere to be found when you land at Lhasa airport, but one of the locals tells you that he left a message requesting you to meet him at the dig site. Although the airstrip was on the lower slopes of the Himalayas it was relatively accessible and you were thought a competent pilot. You hired a run-down but functioning Cessna and crash-landed right into the first location. Just before you baled out, you could have sworn you saw the glint of sunlight on a glass building – but surely not out here in the middle of nowhere?

If all goes well, you should negotiate the ferocious bear, having previously equipped yourself for the conditions by picking up the fur coat and snowshoes from the Cessna. Picking up the coat has you wearing it, which is just as well, as the program does not understand the verb WEAR. An unlucky pot-holer sees your next advance; you profit from the fact he's as stiff as a plank and won't be needing his equipment, which is precious to you in your predicament. Following things through in a fairly simple manner you will come upon a small round ice cave where a frozen waterfall hangs down from the ceiling, and a ledge hangs high up on the east wall. Here lies one of my few moans about this game; the program does not comprehend THROW ROPE but accepts CLIMB ROPE – without you first throwing it or otherwise tethering it to something. I don't know about you, but to me this somehow doesn't feel right. However, such inconsistencies are rare, and on the whole the program is reasonably intelligent – and sometimes quite innovative, as with the icicle which melts on entering the warm environs of the hotel.

Winter Wonderland is in the same sort of ball park as *Apache Gold* when it comes to difficulty of play; both games are popularist and will appeal to beginner and devotee alike. In the entertainment stakes, again, there is not much between the games – it really depends upon which theme appeals the most. *Winter Wonderland*'s location descriptions are never particularly long, but they are always well-constructed, imaginative pieces with clues as to how you might proceed. A good example of what INCENTIVE's *Graphic Adventure Creator* can do.



COMMENTS

Difficulty: not difficult
Graphics: quite good in places
Presentation: alright
Input facility: includes AND, THEN and IT
Response: fast
General rating: a well written, interesting story

Atmosphere	**89%**
Vocabulary	**81%**
Logic	**80%**
Addictive quality	**92%**
Overall	**89%**

FORGOTTEN CITY

Producer: **HAWK**
Price: **£3.50**
Authors: **M Adams & M Kennedy**

I had a quick read of the letter accompanying this one, and if I got the facts right, HAWK is an acronym standing for Home Adventure Writing Korporation. The three-man team (the third is an **Andrew** *Sherlock* **Heads** *who is chief tester) are only sixteen years of age – pretty good going when you consider this Quilled, Illustrator*ed and *Patch*ed game isn't too bad at all – certainly one of the most professional mail order games received this month.

The inlay is of a professional standard, the storyline is most readable and the program skips along nicely. There's also a crafty bit of marketeering going on here (must be those business awareness lessons they have in schools in front of the news cameras) whereby the first 25 people to complete this trip to the almost forgotten Atlantis get a free crack at their next release. I would, however, take issue with one piece of business bureaucracy that should be left in the textbooks – allowing 28 days for delivery went out with the slide-rule in every office except those in the public sector (and estate agents of course, how do they get away with it?). Boys, unless you're training for a life in the Civil Service, I would send out games by return of post.

As you might glean from the intro, this is a cut above your usual mail order game; take the option of Side A and its black print on white background for masochists and the Side B option of restful yellow on black – yummy! The character set is clearly redesigned, which is a blessing after all the unreadable scrolls I've struggled through in recent months.

The story behind this one reads well, so let's have a look at it . . . Reports from the earth monitoring satellite, Intelsat, have pinpointed a source of radiation somewhere in the mid-Atlantic. Co-ordinates obtained from radio-thermal



scans suggest a man-made source – yet there is no land within a thousand miles of the area! It is your good self who first propounds the theory of the lost city of Atlantis, and you become interested in the myths of Neptune and the Power Trident as told by that Greek raconteur, Plato.

The Trident gained its energy by concentrating a power from the green rays of the planet Neptune, giving the Sea God the ability to control the elements. Neptune descended to the depths for eternity, but left his trident in the hands of the Atlanteans. This great civilisation designed a vast security complex to house the treasure, and it has remained there ever since. Clearly, if you could grasp the trident and bring it back to England, the reality of Atlantis would be proven and your wealth assured. A light aircraft takes you to the scene of the radiation, and flying through dense grey clouds, you at last see the lost city, far below and basked in apparent sunshine.

You begin with an imaginative representation of a beach, which is smartly boxed in – showing a rather clean-cut and attractive screen image with the yellow on black option. Now, being a bit of a berk, or perhaps in the endeavour to explore all pathways, I went about the business of climbing into my Douglas light aircraft, inserting the key, pressing the button and shooting off for home. Unfortunately, I hadn't attempted the adventure and did not have the trident – but at least me telling you this saves *you* the bother of climbing into the cockpit straight away.

Having decided to at least have a quick look round Atlantis, I got on with the adventure, heading off east into the coastal forest with its low bushes and exotic berries. Examining the berries revealed them to be medicinal fruit, but picking them up wasn't acknowledged with the age-old OK, instead you have to resort to checking your inventory. So now you have a small key and a machete (from the start) and the exotic fruits. I don't think I'm giving anything away when I say that the machete is used to hack away the undergrowth around the ancient Atlantean temple, but getting over the precipitous edge of the lava pit there might prove a little more tricky. The path to the city of Atlantis lies another way.

The city of Atlantis is a highly advanced one – its marvellous structures and buildings are enclosed in a huge glass dome which is used to regulate temperature and climate. The urban area is divided up into blocks or sectors. Notable examples are the Cultural and Civilian sectors (neither title sounding appropriate when 'A robot dog comes up to you, lifts one of its legs and proceeds to oil all over your feet!'). Galleries and Museums are to be found in the Cultural Sector, while homes, gardens and parks lie within the Civilian Sector. The Atlanteans themselves are a kind and gentle race, who refrain from any sort of violence. Even so, crime does exist, hence all citizens wear identity tags which bear the symbol of the trident. These tags are inspected by robots who soon have you looking in from outside the perimeter fence should you be found without one. Avoiding anti-social mechanical dogs and robots, you will still find the city's drunks bumping into you, but you can wreak revenge by stealing some loose change from the people of the street on Beggar's Corner.

Forgotten City is a superb adventure for a game only available mail order from (HAWK ADVENTURING, 29 Hollowgate, Barnburgh, South Yorks DN5 7BH). The location descriptions aren't particularly long and evocative, and the vocabulary can be strict on occasions, but it has many strong points – not least of which is its ability to skip along merrily while keeping the adventurer thoroughly engaged. A sophisticated job lads, but really, I would consider putting back the deadline for your competition; I think February 1 is a bit early – for this review if nothing else!

COMMENTS

Difficulty: straightforward
Graphics: imaginative and colourful
Presentation: good options
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: fast *Quill* response
General rating: good

Atmosphere	86%
Vocabulary	83%
Logic	89%
Addictive quality	89%
Overall	**87%**

LANDFALL ON ROLLUS

Producer: Clwyd Adventure Software
Price: **£2.99**
Author: **G Frampton**

It began as just another routine planetary survey. The starship Nebula IV, already two years and 23 new worlds into her mission, had dropped into normal space in the vicinity of a bright white sun around which orbited a system of eight planets. Of these, only the third seemed worthy of further investigation.

J14692 was an Earth-type world, comprising two large continents separated by a vast ocean, across which raged strong winds and heavy storms. The native population, that appeared to resemble Mankind closely, was estimated to be at technological and cultural level F6 (ie roughly equivalent to Middle Ages Europe), although with two marked variations. Magic, in a variety of forms, seemed commonplace on both continents, and secondly, a small area of Continent Two proved impenetrable by ship sensors, an anomaly totally out of keeping with the planet's apparent technological level.

As it turned out, it was these 'variations' that were to cause all the trouble.

The year is 2285. Mankind, having finally solved the problem of interstellar flight, has set forth to explore the Galaxy under the strict control of the Department of Galactic Survey and Colonisation – commonly known as GalSAC. The name, as it turned out, proved extremely apt as the human race quickly began to strip each new world of its assets with little regard for any native population unable to assert its rights.

The job of the SAC ships was to locate and conduct initial surveys of potentially useful worlds. A small, self-sufficient shuttle-craft containing 3 Survey Officers was ejected into the atmosphere of each promising planet, to be collected again in approximately 1 Earth Year. The SAC ship meanwhile continued on its journey repeating the procedure until all the survey shuttles had been released, returning at the appointed time to gather up the ships and the crews' valuable findings.

As one of the survey team allocated to J14692, your mission was to undertake an investigation of the section of Continent Two which was impervious to the SAC ship sensors. Your mission came to an abrupt end however, when the shuttle developed a malfunction resulting in engine failure. You were the only survivor of the resultant crash.

With no radio to contact the mother ship on its return, your future looked uncertain to say the least. Would it be possible to make a radio on such a primitive planet? Your only hope seemed to be the blank area a world away – but how would you get there with no ocean-going ships?

Then one night you find yourself at the camp-fire of an old traveller. The man recounted an ancient legend, the origins of which were lost in the mists of time. The legend stated that a race of Shining Gods once ruled Rollus – the planet's real name, which stemmed from that earlier occupation. The people lived in peace and plenty, until one dark day the Gods withdrew across the ocean to a place where none could follow. There the Gods wait until this very day, for the Golden Age to once again return.

The only other useful information you are able to elicit is that far to the east, within a circle of unscalable mountains, there may lie a portal used by the Gods aeons ago. The location remains a mystery, for although many have sought it, none have ever returned.

I must say, whatever the pros and cons of playing a CLWYD ADVENTURE SOFTWARE game, at least the background stories are entertaining and well-written. However, as with their previous release, *Futurezoo* (which is now available for £2.99 from CAS), the program itself isn't so well put together. It has a bad case of the 'You Can'ts', centred around the fact that about the only thing you can do is pick up the very obvious object pointed out on a separate line in true primitive *Quill* style. Similarly, the examine command only seems to work on these obvious objects – and even then only sparingly. Take the two objects, the Dog and the Jester (who you find in the Innhouse, and is a peculiar object to pick up . . . I think you'll agree). Neither the Dog nor the Jester (who wanders off after a while) can be examined – surely something of note could have been mentioned for such a colourful character.

The adventure is one of the most difficult to map, with south reversing a north on only rare occasions, despite the accompanying notes which advise the player to draw a map. I found by far the best approach to this adventure is to press any direction key at random – the structure has been so devised that this method sees you shooting around efficiently, while the more careful mapping of routes does you no good whatsoever.

Landfall of Rollus, the first part of the *Starworld* trilogy, is a text-only *Quill*ed adventure obtainable by mail order from 14 Snowdon Avenue, Bryn-Y-Baal, Mold, Clwyd CH7 6SZ. Considering the amount of effort put into the program and storyline I can't rule out the game entirely, but I think the adventure assumes too much from the player – who is expected to struggle through the unimaginative and deadpan first part in order to get to the main adventure.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: difficult in an uncooperative sort of way
Graphics: none
Presentation: plain
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: *Quill*, and therefore fast
General rating: assumes a lot of patience on the part of the player

Atmosphere	71%
Vocabulary	56%
Logic	63%
Addictive quality	60%
Overall	**62%**



MOVIE BUFF'S POKES

Dear DB,
I like adventure games rather than arcade, one problem though – I'm no good at them! In fact the only pure adventure games I have finished are *Robin of Sherwood* and *Lords of Midnight*. I would be most grateful for any starting clues for *Red Moon*, *Wrath of Magra*, *Doomdark's Revenge*, and *Shadow of the Unicorn* (I have found all the objects but what next?).

This is not to say I'm no good at adventure movies; I've finished *Dragontorc*, *Avalon*, *Dun Darach*, *Tir Na Nog*, and more. I also feel it necessary to make a correction to P Stevenson's *Lords of Midnight* POKEs way back in Nov 85 as; 1) it crashes if not changed, and 2) *LOM* is such a brilliant adventure that those who have it cannot be without this POKE. To remind you, the POKE enables you to walk through wandering ice trolls, dragons, wolves and skulkrin, to move at night and not become immobile when 'utterly tired', to move out of battles at any time, and to have immediate access to all characters, so here it is.

```
1 REM MIDNIGHT POKES
10 CLEAR 65535 : POKE
23570,16
20 PRINT AT 9,6 ; "START MID-
NIGHT TAPE"
30 LOAD "" CODE 16384
40 FOR F = 23317 TO 23335 :
READ A : POKE F,A : NEXT F
50 DATA 33,0,0,34,99,253
60 DATA 34,14,8,96,33,24,62
70 DATA 34,195,98,195,117,96
80 RANDOMIZE USR 23300
```

Darren Andrews, Watford

THE THREE MONTH BUG

Dear Sir,
I agree with producers of computer games, that bugs are bound to appear on a complex game, but I would rather wait an extra three months while the game was playtested than have a game crash when you're doing well. What are your views?

Chris Counsell, Southampton

I think it's a difficult problem to solve. Software houses are often reluctant to give a game much play-testing on the grounds that the author knows the game much better, and hence can test it much quicker. This ignores the fact that the author is probably sick of the sight of the game after working on it for three to six months.

The author knows how to play the game and will find it difficult to keep making the errors that a newcomer to the game would make. Also, it must be said, despite rumours to the contrary, programmers aren't paid enough to be able to add another three months to development time. The best solution is probably to have five or six games-players test the product for a couple of weeks. This would find most bugs. Also, if the author writes the conversions to other computers this will go a long way to tracking down bugs.

DB

HALF WAY UP THE WALL SEEKS MORE OF THE SAME

Dear Derek,
What I am writing about is (believe it or not) adventures! I have just started on the things, and I'm not doing too badly. I've completed *Mafia Contract*, *Seabase Delta*, and *El Dorado* (not to mention being half way through *Mural*) and I wonder if you could help me. I want some more adventures. I have practically exhausted my pitiful collection, and I would like you to recommend some good (cheapish!) games to me. I know that's the whole point of SIGNPOST and your reviewing games, but I'm damned if I'm going to sit down and go through every single one of my CRASHes. Thanks for your help, sir.

Scott Robinson, Lincoln

Thanks for the letter, Scott, and I hope that the good computer studies school report you included with your letter is genuine!

As for adventure games, you tend to get what you pay for with one notable exception: old full-price games now on offer at budget prices are well worth checking out. To give specific recommendations, working through past issues I found few worthy of consideration beyond the ones you've mentioned. I was just about to give up trying when I thought of something that you, and indeed anyone else, could try, and that was to read SIGNSTUMPS, as here is a guide to adventures people are still playing. Browsing through just two STUMPS brought up the following cheapies: THE HULK (now available on a cheap label), QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL, SUBSUNK, and FIREBIRD's other cheapie of that era, THE HELM.

DB

SORRY MINORITY

Dear Derek,
I am going to shove in my oar on the already well worn subject of the *Lord of the Rings*. I am not an avid adventure games player, preferring arcade games (adventure games require brains). However, I did buy *LOR* and really wished I hadn't. Why did you Smash this game and only give *The Boggit* a mere 90%?

Anyway, enough has been said about *LOR* already and I do think that while people are quick to criticise they never seem to write in saying how good a company is. I am going to change this. I have got all of DELTA 4's games and I think that their spoofs are far, far better than games like *LOR* which you seem to adore. If there is anybody out there in the minority of people who have not seen a DELTA 4 game I feel really sorry for them.

Ravi Srinivasan, Surrey

A mere 90%!

DB

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO . . .

Dear Derek Brewster,
Please help me as no-one else will, you are my last resort. Do you know anything about *The Eye of the Moon* by MIKE SINGLETON? Remember *The Lords of Midnight* and *Doomdark's Revenge*? Well, whatever happened to the third part? I have written to BEYOND four times and have heard nothing. Have I missed reading something about it, or do you know something? Help, please.

Stephen McLear, Glasgow

The latest on this one is that Mike Singleton is far too busy with outstanding projects (DARK SCEPTRE, STAR TREK) to commit himself to a third MIDNIGHT game. Given the workload the poor chap has taken on (a MELBOURNE HOUSE release bearing his name has now appeared) and the inability of these projects to keep to release dates, I wouldn't expect too much in the near future.

DB

BORN AGAIN MEDDLER

Dear Derek,
I'm writing to you because I have two things to tell you. The first is about the *Price of Magik* from LEVEL 9. I've discovered a way to be reborn after you have been killed. I will give the explanation of the method point by point:
1) After you've been killed the computer will ask you to RESTORE or RESTART; you must enter RESTORE
2) Then press SPACE
3) Press SPACE again and you'll be asked to enter a two letter code. Don't enter the code that appears on the screen but instead enter another. You will be told that the code is wrong: don't worry.
4) Enter a different code (eg FG and then KL).
5) enter KL again (so it's one code, another and repeat the second one)

The result of all this will be your return to the adventure in the location it ended, but this time you'll have 252 (!) stamina points, and can continue your adventure where you stopped. I think this will be very useful if you cannot pass a particular location because of a very difficult 'monster'. I must tell you that I have only tried it in the text-only version, but I think it'll also work in the graphic version.

About this game, could you please tell me if the only objective is to find spells and discover their purpose? If so, and after having visited 90-plus locations, I must tell that I find this game very boring because there are too many locations you can travel without having to solve puzzles to progress. I must say that this kind of thing doesn't amuse me at all.

Overall, I'm finding this game a big disappointment as even in the text-only version the descriptions are not at all atmospheric, being 'You are in the cellar, exits are. . . . ',and the like, so I cannot get involved in the game as I could with any good adventure. So please, tell me something to get me interested in the game.

The second thing I've discovered (I don't know if I'm the first to think about it) is the fact that you can load a *Quilled* game into *The Quill*, and so you are able to see how the authors have done all the game (and of course if you know how to work *The Quill* you'll be able to solve the puzzles). This of course will spoil the game if you are not careful. I've done this with *Tower of Despair* and *Hampstead*, but haven't been able to do it with the other *Quilled* game I have: *Terrormolinos*.

Joao Carvalmo, Lisbon

TRICKY INTERFACE

Dear Derek,
I've a very important question (and complaint) on the brilliant *GAC*. Although I am very satisfied with this great program, there's one big problem: as an owner of a ZX LPRINT III Centronics interface, I'm not able to use the printer option of *GAC*, as the program crashes when the interface is connected. Please! Can anybody help me with a program with which you can load the data directly and then print it out with any interface? Does anyone know the start address for the printer routine of *GAC*? Is it perhaps because I am using a 128K?

Mario Schlesinger, West Germany

A WINTER'S TALE

Dear Derek,
With winter's dark presence firmly gripping all those who venture outdoors, many minds may turn towards adventuring for intellectual escapism. Ensconced within walls, in gloomy, warm cluttered rooms, we might gaze at falling snow, nebulous and orange in the glow of neon city lights. And afterwards, when the firmament shines clear, and the moon gleams with mystic mischief on the bared roses in gardens, their black silhouettes a striking contrast to the pristine snow, you may shiver at the universe, its enormity threatening to overwhelm you, cold cascading from the night skies as you long for security. And at last you're there. You stumble into a corner, flick away wayward magazine covers, and reveal the abstruse ebony casing of your personal computer, all logic circuits, plastics and metal. Supply the power, press buttons and relax as the electric currents you've unleashed bring you closer by the microsecond to the artistic portals of your next great adventure.

The above is an attempt to translate the experience that a computer game should be, a marvellous entertainment in which you participate rather than just regard. It is this quality that gives computing a dimension more than TV, and one that, should programmers cultivate the 'adventure movie' more and more, could eventually see computer-gaming rival television as a medium for entertainment. Improved graphic resolution will enable us to realistically enter into characters we view: be wizards, knights, astronauts, or anything else. Animated adventures such as *Avalon* pioneered this concept and I look forward to a 128K future and beyond, where these games will become even more realistic, more enjoyable and more of an experience.

Meanwhile, your review of *Jewels of Darkness* has persuaded me to enter LEVEL 9's world this Christmas, even though I haven't, hitherto, delved too deeply into text quests . . . I look forward to the experience.

Glenn Gray, West Yorks

PS Has SIGNPOST become a playing tips arena? What happened to literary discourse in your column letters?

Well, Glenn, SIGNPOST is still reserved for literary discourse on all manner of topics, it's just that long tips for involved strategy type games have been more common recently.

DB

CLAUSTROPHOBIC GAC

Dear Derek,
I started out my Spectrum days in early '83, and spent much of my computer time after, bashing keyboards and breaking joysticks. When I tired of this I turned to BASIC programming, making simple games and one or two rudimentary utility programs.

When I heard of *White Lightning* I rushed down to the local computer shop and bought myself a copy. I have used it to make small animation routines and I did actually make a small *Defender*-type game. Now I have purchased the *Graphic Adventure Creator* and have spent many painstaking hours writing a lengthy game on it. The snag was the limited memory. This meant if I wanted graphics I had to shrink descriptions down to a bare minimum, and if I wanted long atmospheric descriptions I had to limit use of graphics or maybe even abandon then altogether (and as you have said yourself, adventure games without graphics are not too commercial nowadays). I do not like the idea of making multi-part adventures to such an extent as to have only seventy or eighty locations per part (I find the areas too small to work in). Lately I have been considering an upgrade to 128K and I would like to know if there is any way of accessing the extra memory of the 128 so I can really go to town on a good old jaunt on the *GAC*.

Darrell Jon Smith, South Yorkshire

LAUNCHING CRUZ MISSIVES

Dear Derek,
My friends and I completed *L'Affaire Vera Cruz* and here is our solution. In the first part of the game we discovered: one packet of Rothmans, one 9mm automatic pistol type MAC 50, serial no 965743, one 9mm cartridge marked TE 9 F 3-79, one suicide note, one matchbox from Bor Le Sympa in 2 Station Street, St Etienne, one Rothmans stub and one Camel stub with traces of lipstick proving that Vera was not alone, one handbag containing a packet of Camel cigarettes and various accessories marked Vera Cruz, one diary containing these addresses: EVA Transport Cafe in Givors, Nadine Lafeuille, 2 Balay Street St Etienne, Hub 77523977 and 'Fuzzy' Bar in Popiars, and a black cotton thread under the fingernail of the left hand.

In Part Two we got a statement from Nadine Lafeuille who said that Vera was afraid of a certain 'gypsy' because she knew too much about a certain business. We then contacted the CRRJ Lyon and asked for info on 'Fuzzy' and we found out that his real name was Abdoulah Hocine. Next we got his statement and he told us that Vera's pimp was Philibert Ziegler. We then went to the CRRJ Lyon and asked for info on Ziegler and we found that his nickname was gypsy, and he had been arrested for possession of firearms and assaulting someone. The affair had been handled by Gies Galmier, and Ziegler had been imprisoned near St Paul Lyon.

We then contacted Gie St Galmier and asked for Information Philibert Ziegler Affair and we were told that he had been arrested for assaulting a client of prostitute Eva Delarue. We then contacted Pris St Paul and asked for information on Ziegler Philibert and we learnt that his cellmates were Georges Lerat and Gilles Blanc. We also learnt that Ziegler lives at Carnot Square St Etienne. Next we got the statement of Eva Delarue who could be found at the Transport Cafe in Givors 69 (from Vera's diary). She told us that Vera did not commit suicide and that she knew too much about a robbery of one of her clients, a Hubert Delroche of St Etienne.

We then got the statement of Hubert Delroche. Just type in St Etienne for his address and he told us that he had visited Vera but his wife had been murdered in a robbery and the affair was being handled by Ciat St Etienne. We then contacted the Ciat St Etienne and asked for information on Herbert Delroche Affair, they told us that during the robbery Mme Delroche was shot by someone who answered to the name Phil. Also a 9mm cartridge marked TE9F3-79 was found and that the getaway car was a BMW.

Next we contacted the CRRJ Lyon and asked for information on the 9mm MAC 50 automatic pistol, serial no G56743. We were told that the gun was stolen from the barracks of the gunsmith of the 92 IR Clermont Ferrand, and the affair wa handled by the Gie Clermont. When we contacted the Gie Clermont they told us that the gun had been stolen along with a batch of ammunition marked TE 9F 3-79, also there was a BMW seen in the area with registration ending in CD 69. The message also said that the thief was probably an ex-soldier of the 92 IR Clermont.

To get the first part of the BMW's registration you should got to statement and type caretaker then Forest apartment. From the caretaker, Simon Duplat, we found out the first bit of the registration, 9111 and that two men were seen leaving the scene and one had a heavy moustache. Next go back to Philibert Ziegler and get his statement. He can be found at Carnot Square but he will be uncooperative. Next go to Comparison and enter Philibert Ziegler. Next go to CRRJ Lyon and ask for Information on Gilles Blanc and you will be informed that he was arrested for receiving stolen jewels. The affair was handled by Ciat Lyon. Next go to Message and contact Pref Lyon and enter Identification no 9111 CD 69. You will get a reply the car belongs to Philippe Blanc of 32 Terreax Square Lyon 69. Call up the CRRJ Lyon about Philippe Blanc and it will tell you to contact the BORJ St Etienne. The Borj will tell you that Philippe is wanted for attempted murder of a brigadier Leroux and the affair is being handled by the CIAT PARIS.

Get a statement from Philippe Blanc to get some information, then contact Gilles Blanc who can be found at 2 Station Street and get his statement – he will have an alibi. To check Gilles Blanc go to comparison and enter Gilles Blanc to get some more useful information. Then to check Gilles' alibi get the statement of Kowalski Stanislas whose address you get from Gilles' statement. He will deny Gilles' alibi and tell you that Philippe killed Madame Delroche. Next get another statement from Philibert Ziegler who will admit to being Vera's pimp and supplying Gilles with information on the Delroche jewellers.

Then go back and get another statement from Gilles and he will admit to being in Vera's flat but not to her murder. Get another statement from Philippe and he will admit to Vera's murder. All you have to do now is go to arrest and enter Philippe Blanc and that's it. The final message is Bravo! It was Philippe who cold bloodedly assassinated Vera.

Your relentless pursuit of the villain merits my congratulations. I hope this will give you the desire to follow others. Goodbye for now . . . Gilles Blanoon.

C Nicholl, P Richards, G Carpenter, Belfast

PS Abdoulah Hoaine can be found at Poplars.

The reason for publishing another VERA CRUZ letter this month, after the one from Don Markwick last month, is that his was a subtle solution which didn't give the whole game away (hence his winning the prize). This month's solution fills in the gaps for those who might still be struggling.
DB

COLOUR OF MAGIC POKE

Dear Derek,
I am writing to you about the game *The Colour of Magic*. Here is a program to list the vocabulary. I know the program to list the vocabulary has already been printed, but DELTA 4 have improved the loader and used security methods. The program that Richard Heywood sent in is included at the end.

```
10 REM MAGIC POKE BY PAUL
MATHEWS
20 BORDER 0 : PAPER 0 : INK 0
: BRIGHT 1 : CLEAR 32767 :
POKE 23613,0 : LOAD "" CODE
64600 : POKE 23606,88 : POKE
23607,251: POKE 23613,0 :
LOAD "" CODE 32768
30 OVER 1 : INK 8 : PAPER 8 :
CLEAR 24899 : RANDOMIZE
USR 32768 : POKE 23613,0 :
LOAD "" CODE : POKE 23613,0
: POKE 23606,142 : POKE
23607,228 : PAUSE 0
40 REM RICHARD HEYWOODS
PROGRAM
50 FOR N = 25000 TO 64000
60 LET Z = 223 : PEEK N +32
70 IF Z < 32 OR Z > 164 THEN
GOTO 90
80 PRINT CHR$ Z ;
90 NEXT N
```

If you want to start the game, break into the program and type RANDOMIZE USR 24900.

Paul Mathews, Watford

This month's £20 software prize goes to Paul Mathews, not only for his published letter, but also for his COLOUR OF MAGIC tips which will be invaluable for helping fellow adventurers.

SIGN STUMPS

There was another record mailbag this month for SIGNSTUMPS, with questions spread over a wide range of games. I'll try to answer questions on as many different games as possible.

Several adventurers are stuck near the beginning in** KWAH, **being unable to escape from the padded cell. Before you are caught you should SFDPSE LXBI – this can be played back when you are tied up. Once free you should return to being Kevin and QVU QBTT JO HBQ.

N M Girling ***from High Wycombe is stuck on*** NEVER ENDING STORY ***and writes:***

" I have reached the tower after Fantasia has disintegrated, have managed to find my way to the top and have come across the door which refuses to open. It says it will open only to people it likes – polite people. No amount of compliments or requests or just waiting politely will persuade the door to open. How do I get through? "

It's quite simple really just TBZ QMFBTF PFO EPPS.

Anonymous ***from Pontypool, Gwent writes concerning*** ZZZZ ***and asks:***

" How do I put the fire out in the fireplace and how do I fill the water pistol? "

To fill the water pistol QVU CVDLFU PO IPPL JO XFMM, UVSO IBOEMF, UVSO IBOEMF, HFU CVDLFU, GJMM QJTUPM. Peter Magee ***from Limavady, Northern Ireland provides the following solution to extinguish the fire: CLIMB DOWN CHAIN OF WELL, TURN ON TAP DOWN WELL, SEARCH TRAPDOOR, this opens the trapdoor and the water coming out extinguishes the fire.***

Mark Malone ***of Accrington asks:***

" In the VERY BIG CAVE ADVENTURE how do you get rid of the bull the second time after taking the penny and getting the wellies etc "

On the same game Neil Hickman ***has rather enthusiastically written two letters asking:***

" 1) How do you open the Clam?
2) What do you do in Gotham City?
3) How do you get past the hairy monster?
4) How do you find a piece of plate to add to the contribution? "

To open the clam you will need the KFNNZ, then KFNNZ DMBN. When you arrive at Gotham City go F,T, then FYBNJOF CVCCMFT, now go to the alley to the north of the police station and FYBNJOF XBMM. I'll leave you to discover the rest for yourself. To pass the hairy figure HJWF SFDPSE, HP TPVUI, GFF GJF. The piece of plate is in the GSFODI DIFFTF SPPN, to find it FXBNJOF XBMM.

Try UISPX CPNC.

THE BOGGIT ***is still proving troublesome for many adventurers. This month*** Shaun Somers ***from Sheffield asks:***

" How do you get past the spider's web in Part Three. Also, what do you do when you get to the Necromancer's Lunatic Asylum and where is the coin? "

To pass web QVMM XFCC then go OF. At the asylum JOTFSU (TFDVSJUZ) DBSE, VOUJF ESBJO to find TNBMM DVSJPVT LFZ. To get cash, go to the HPCMJOT EVOHFPO and TNBTI USBQEPPS.



ENCRYPTION CORNER

It's easy to speak Brewster!

ENGLISH:	ZABCDEFGHIJKL
BREWSTER:	ABCDEFGHIJKLM
ENGLISH:	MNOPQRSTUVWXY
BREWSTER:	NOPQRSTUVWXYZ

M Smith ***from Ruislip, Middlesex is having difficulty with*** MAFIA CONTRACT ***and writes:***

" Every time I reach Vincetti's I pass out through lack of alcohol. Where do I get a drink from? "

You should get off the train at DIJOB UPXO and HJWF USBNQ OFXTQBQFS for NFUIT.

T Brett ***is having difficulty leaving the magic garden in Part One of*** THE SNOW QUEEN.

Quite a complicated problem this! First you must learn to talk to plants. You must find the right book and read it twice. Once you have done this go and talk to the Michaelmas Daisies outside the north gate. You will now need a key to the gate – this can be obtained from the person who is frequently entering and leaving the grounds.

Graeme Queen ***from East Kilbride asks:***

" Could you please tell me what to do in these two adventures:
1) MINDSHADOW – how to get a plane ticket
2) LORD OF THE RINGS – what to do when you get to Lothlorien? "

To get a plane ticket, bribe the password from the tramp, return to the Baker St store and using the password and money obtain a ticket.

I presume you haven't crossed the river in Lothlorien! At the border you will meet an elf, continue East through the forest until you come to a river, ask the elf for help and then follow him. This latter solution was supplied by Mike Siviet ***of Bristol.***

Finally, *Graham Galbraith from Newcastle upon Tyne has a couple of problems in the* PRICE OF MAGIK ***and asks:***

" What is the answer to the riddle in the spherical rock bubble? How do you get the alloy wheel? In the December STUMPS you suggested that the vampire bat should be able to help; I can see the logic there (bats have sonar) but how do I get that across to the bat? "

The answer to the riddle, I think, is GFBS. You will need the DSPTT to make the bat friendly.

That's it for another month, keep on sending in your questions as well as any help you can offer to:
SIGNSTUMPS
P.O. BOX 10
LUDLOW
SHROPSHIRE
SY8 1AQ

50 Copies of SHORT CIRCUIT TO BE WON!

Crash Competition







A new game is on its way from OCEAN: they're about to release *Short Circuit*, based on a new film all about a mutant robot called Number Five who's been zapped by a bolt of lightning. This lightning bolt has fried his diodes and the end result is that Number Five is no longer a mere machine, but has developed feelings and emotions. His creator is naturally a mite puzzled by this, and wants to conduct terminal experiments to discover the fault. However, Number Five wants to keep his new-found feelings . . . the game is all about the robot's struggle to get out of the experimental laboratory.

There's no chance that I shall be able to see the film as there's no cinema in Ludlow and Mummy Minion isn't too enthusiastic about driving me all the way to Shrewsbury. I shall just have to wait until the game comes out, which it should any day now. I don't suppose I'll be able to play it for ages if the CRASH team have their way, though. Sigh.

As I was in the broom cupboard last week, I began to daydream. I imagined that an amazing thing happened to me. Struck by a lightning bolt that changed my molecular structure, I became incredibly intelligent. Think of the possibilities: I could really stand up for myself and think up lots of clever replies when the CRASH lot are having a go at me! Unfortunately my dream took a nasty turn. Once the Editorial staff realised my capacities they loaded even more work on me. Guru Denise had me sorting out all the subscriptions for her as I was now faster than a computer. The Spikey-Haired Ones got me to write all their reviews because of my superior intelligence, and before long I found myself virtually running the company. I had to get out! But by now the CRASH Towers resembled a maze and I couldn't find the exit. Everywhere I looked there were faces and hands trying to push acres of paper-work into my sweaty paws. And just like the film, Graeme Kidd was sharpening some very long knives and talking about brain surgery and conducting experiments to find out what made me tick. I woke up in a cold sweat, knowing just how poor Number Five feels in *Short Circuit*.

To cheer myself up, I organised a competition with OCEAN. Below is a word square. Find the ten words listed, circle them and you could be one of the fifty people who are due to get a copy of *Short Circuit* absolutely FREE. So don't delay! Write today! Get your felt pens out and send your entries in to **SHORT CIRCUIT COMPETITION, CRASH TOWERS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1BD** making sure that they arrive before March 26th.

SHORT	**NOVA**
CIRCUIT	**ROBOTICS**
NUMBER	**OCEAN**
FIVE	**ROBOT**
DIODES	**ESCAPE**

A	O	X	T	V	R	F	I	V	E
C	C	F	M	O	E	I	D	O	S
D	E	J	S	M	B	Q	C	U	C
C	A	N	O	V	A	O	N	W	A
I	N	H	U	S	H	O	R	T	P
R	P	B	L	M	P	B	K	V	E
C	K	F	S	T	B	O	H	Q	L
U	U	D	I	O	D	E	S	R	H
I	G	I	Y	T	J	Z	R	E	A
T	N	S	C	I	T	O	B	O	R

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WIBSTARS

Producer: A'n'F
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Author: **Icon Design**

Have you ever wondered how computer games find their way onto the shelves of your local computer store? If *Wibstars* is to be believed, it's amazing it happens at all.

In many respects, *Wibstars* resembles those trading/strategy games that were so popular a few years back, exccept that this one has strong arcade overtones. The first task for Billy Wibstar, entrepeneur and novice businessman, is to collect trading goods from a warehouse.

Three types of commodity are available: computers cost £100, disks go for a tenner, and cassettes set you back a fiver. Billy starts off with £200 in small-denomination, used notes – borrowed from a sceptical dad. Goods are collected on-screen with the use of a fork-lift truck, represented by an icon. This can be moved over to icons represnting the computers, disks and cassettes. Keeping the fork-lift pressed against the icon, increases the number of the commodity ordered. When the amount you want is reached – or you run out of cash – taking the fork-lift down to the the exit moves the game on to the second stage.

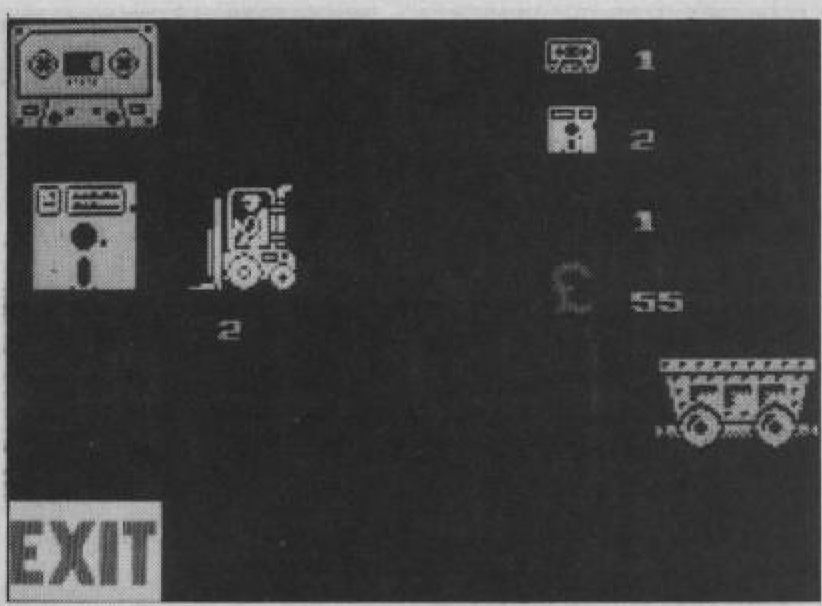
This involves the loading of young Bill's van. The guys in despatch aren't particularly helpful though, flinging the items down four chutes in rapid succession, and forcing Billy to move his van back and forth in an attempt to catch as much of his order as possible.

In the third stage, Billy hits the streets. But another cowboy distributor has got away from the warehouse first and hogs the road ahead. This screen is a scrolling bird's-eye-view, not unlike *Spy Hunter*, where the two vehicles are able to move left and right across the roadway. To make matters worse for Billy, the van ahead of him has a loose load which is being strewn across the road. There's an advantage to be gained from this however, as driving over useful items such as computers, disks and cassettes adds to Billy's stock. On the other hand, useless debris causes damage which has to be repaired – another drain on his overstretched resources.

The final game section consists of a series of platforms and lifts as Billy attempts to deliver his goods to a shop. Items are only removed from the van one at a time, or, if he feels he's perfected the technique, he can chance an arm and grab the entire hoard of one commodity.

The package is kicked towards a conveyor belt, which should take it into a lift. Timing is critical, as the conveyor may dump the package *under* the lift and crush it – another depreciation of stock.

The final results of Billy's exertions are then totted up. If, after van repairs, he has managed to shift enough merchandise onto the shop's shelves to make a profit, he goes through the whole process again. We are, after all, a nation of shopkeepers, are we not?



Billy Wibstar uses his trusty forklift to load a disc

CRITICISM

● **"This has to be the most infuriating game of the month. I've been playing it for ages now and I still haven't managed to survive a day without being horrendously overdrawn at the end. *Wibstars* plays in a similar way to a lot of the pattern/platform games that were around in late '83; the controls are simple and completing the game requires more timing or luck than skill. If this was going for the bog-standard budget price it would be an average buy – as it's nearer ten quid all I can say is stay well away."**

BEN

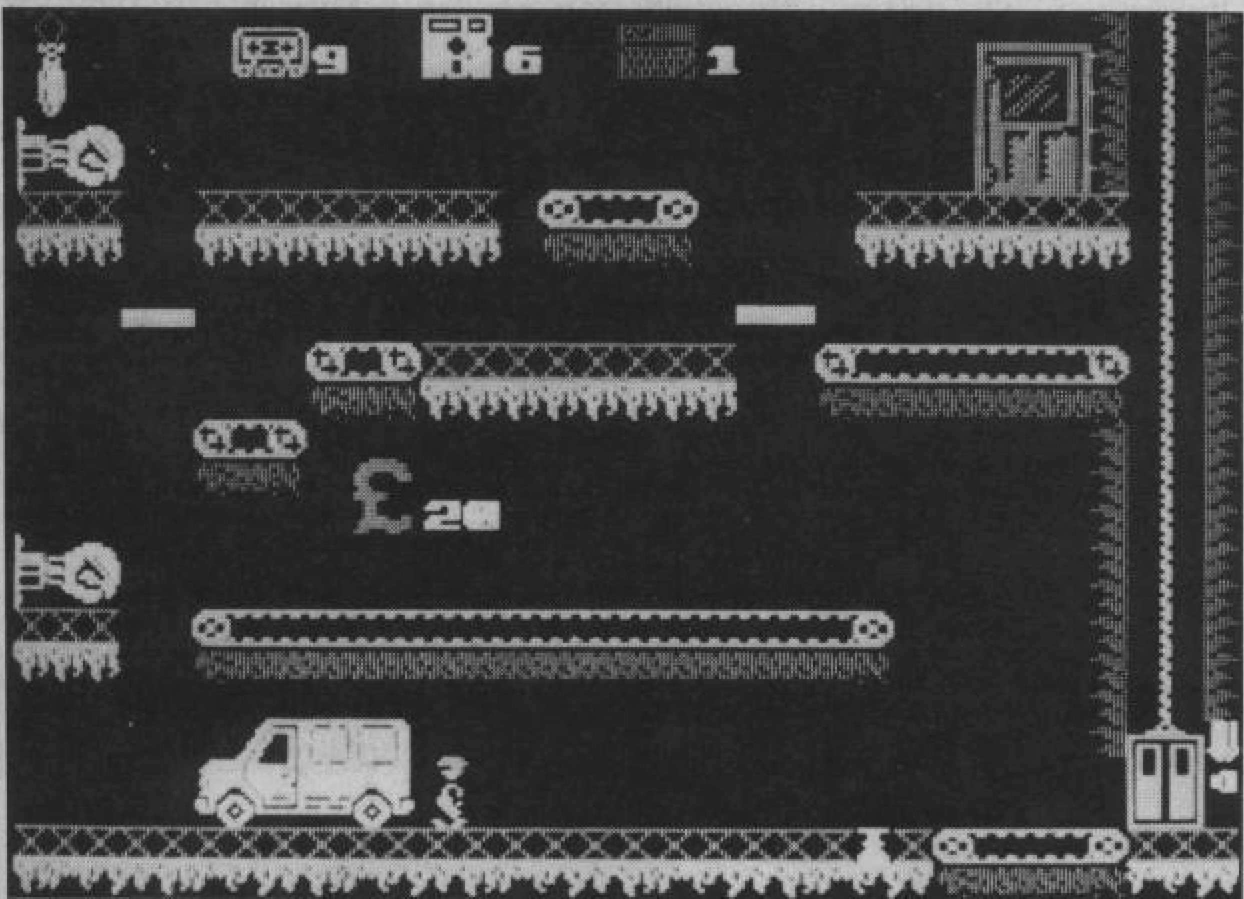
● *"This is basically another platform game. The road sequence is too simple to represent any challenge, and the catching sequence makes little overall difference to the game. The platform sequence is, to say the least, infuriating. The random movements of the lift make the game very, very difficult to ever achieve a profit. The graphics are fairly basic stuff – small, lots of colour and iffy collision detection. And there's not a decent bit of sound to be heard anywhere. This isn't much of an improvement on the last* A'n'F *platform game Chuckie Egg II."*

PAUL

● "Haven't you always wanted to be able to take the role of a distributor? No? What a coincidence! Nor have I. This is a fairly poor game. The graphics are very drab and uninteresting. True, the various stages are very different indeed, but they have one very unfortunate problem – they're all as boring as each other! To be honest, I found the most addictiveness in the catching stage, but similar games can be found in most Spectrum books as listings, and only take half an hour to tap in. Expecting anyone to buy this is asking too much."

MIKE

Having reached the retailers, it's time to unload the merchandise



COMMENTS

Control keys: definable, up, down, left, right, fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: bright and varied
Graphics: do the job without being exciting
Sound: poor
Skill levels: one
Screens: four
General rating: The mixed game elements fail to add up to anything very exciting, especially for the price.

Presentation	57%
Graphics	45%
Playability	34%
Addictive Qualities	32%
Value for money	28%
Overall	35%

FIST II

Producer: Melbourne House
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Author: **Beam Software**

Way of the Exploding Fist was virtually unique. A totally original idea presented in a polished, playable format. It founded the entire beat 'em up genre, and imitations have poured forth ever since. Now at last, nearly two years after the game first appeared, the sequel is here.

The warriors of the Exploding Fist have been betrayed and overthrown, and the land has been enslaved by an evil Warlord. But there is still hope – if one man is brave enough to seek out the temples of the old religion of the Exploding Fist, and discover their secrets, he will grow strong enough to defeat the evil Warlord and thus free the land.



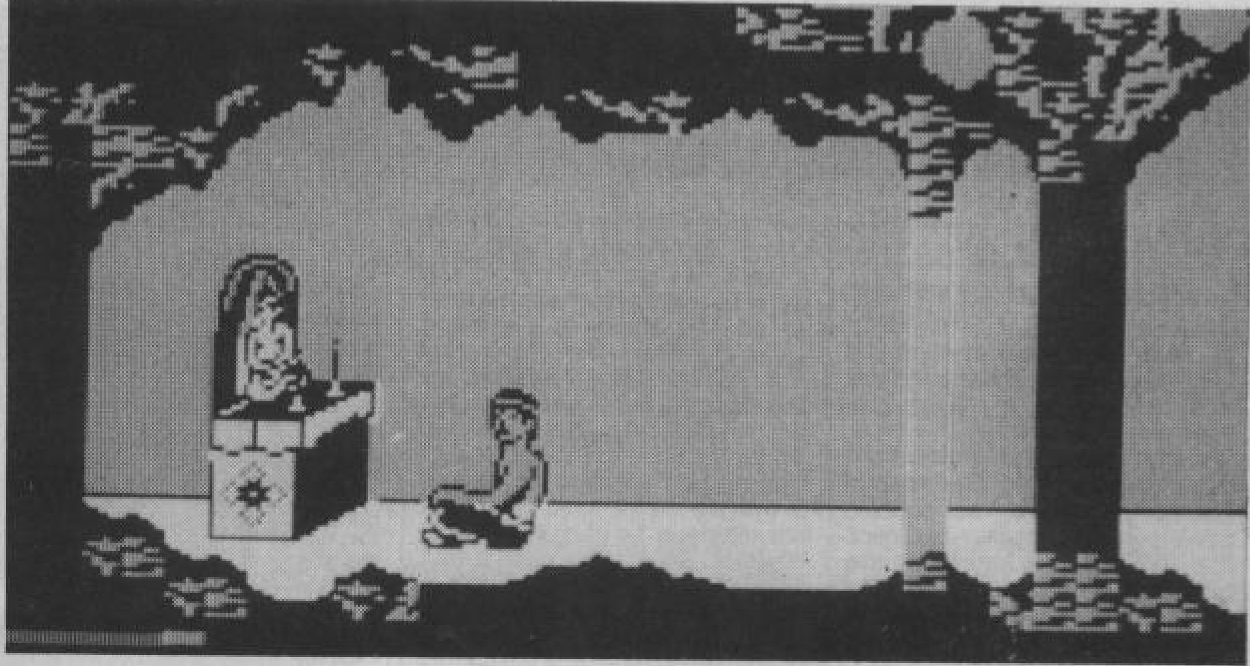
You control the only warrior fit enough to settle the score. To find the temples our hero runs through a horizontally scrolling landscape, climbing up and down ladders and jungle ropes, and jumping down holes or even off high cliffs!

When he encounters a Temple Guardian, the screen stops scrolling and a fight to the death ensues (or your opponent flees off the edge of the screen).

The ultimate goal is to defeat the evil Warlord. To acheive this, the young Disciple has to find eight mystical scrolls and take each to its corresponding temple, thus gaining its power. The length of the disiple's life is governed by his stamina level, this is displayed at the top of the screen. The 'maximum stamina level' begins at a fairly low point, but it increases slowly as more enemies are dealt with. Meditating at a temple also increases this stamina level.

The Temple Guardians come in a number of shapes and sizes. Peasant Soldiers have the least stamina and are the worst fighters. Warrior Guards are slightly harder to defeat. Ninjas, equipped with throwing stars, are better still. Shoguns and Assassins are deadliest opponents of all.

The fighting sequences will be familiar to all beat 'em up fans. There are sixteen moves, accessed by a multitude of joystick wiggles. When a blow is successfully landed, the recipient's stamina level decreases accordingly – a lot for a flying kick, but not so much for a punch. When one of the two combatants runs out of stamina, he is dead. If the Temple Guardian is killed he vanishes – if our hero comes off worse however, he loses one of his three lives and is returned to the last temple he visited. An extra life is awarded each time a scroll is taken to a temple.



The knowledge-seeking disciple meditates at the alter of the Ancient Gods

CRITICISM

● **" What's this, the sequel to the only decent Beat 'em up on the Spectrum. Well, *Fist II* certainly isn't going to take that title away from its predecessor. The gameplay is spoiled by the time spent looking for action (it can take as long as five minutes to encounter the next ninja), and even when the action is found it's pretty tedious. Killing a ninja or a pack of wolverines isn't a feat worth telling your mates about. The thinking behind *Fist II* is sound, but a potentially good game has been marred by bad programming. "**

BEN

● *" I still have a bash on* Way of the Exploding Fist, *but* Fist II *seems to have taken the competitive spirit out of the game. The characters aren't as well drawn as* Fist, *but the landscapes are well designed and give a good feeling of size – it's a pity that some of the landscape repeats itself after only a short walk though. I very quickly got the impression the* Fist II *contains very little to do, apart from trundling all over the place. Beating up the baddies was fun to start with, but they present little challenge.* Fist II *didn't really appeal to me. "*

PAUL

● " Technically, there's nothing wrong with *Fist II*. It's just that stomping around all the locations looking for a few badies to duff up is so boring. The graphics are neat, and the combat sequences are as playable as in the original. Unfortunately, I think that MELBOURNE HOUSE have given *Fist II* far too much hype. Having advertised this for so long, I would have thought that their programming team could have come up with something a little better than this. The combat practice game on the reverse side is fine, but I don't think that it's worth buying just for that. "

MIKE

In his efforts to reach the temple, the young martial arts master must defeat many adversaries



COMMENTS

Control keys: definable, up, down, left, right, fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: unimaginative use of the Spectrum's own colours
Graphics: a great disappointment, especially when compared to its predecessor
Sound: great shouts and screams during the fight sequences, otherwise average
Skill levels: one
Screens: large scrolling landscape
General rating: Doesn't live up to the expectations generated by Way of the Exploding Fist.

Presentation	68%
Graphics	61%
Playability	58%
Addictive qualities	53%
Value for money	58%
Overall	58%

EXPLORER

Producer: Electric Dreams
Retail Price: **£7.99**
Author: **The Ram Jam Corporation**

Gargantuan is an over-used adjective, but 40 billion mappable locations seems to qualify, so using it one more time to describe *Explorer* won't do any harm.

The RAM JAM CORPORATION has ever been a source of oddities, from its first and marvellously humorous *Valkyrie 17* adventure. In this new quest, the cosmic joke is that your second-hand space vehicle has broken up over the Emerald planet. To make matters worse, fragments of your craft have scattered around nine of its 40 billion locations. Sounds like you've got to find them all before escape is possible. Some cosmic joke, huh?

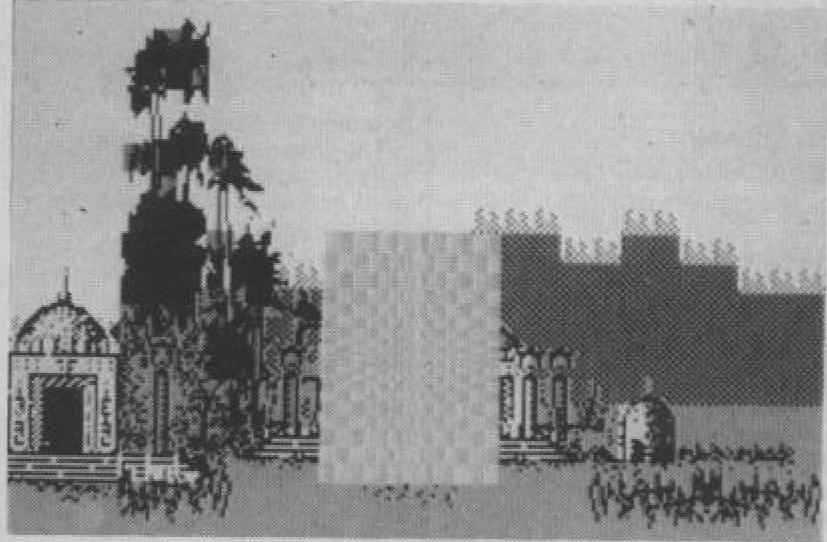
Several vital instruments have survived the crash. There's a Compass, a Homing Beacon, Direction Finder, a Laser Pulse Gun and an all-important Sonar. Recovering the ship parts is a problem, but at least the sonar makes life sound brighter – by bouncing an echo off an object, its bearing and rough distance is revealed. A short walk through the jungle is okay, but you're told if the range is too far for a stroll and it's then time to take to the trusty jet-pack.

When within range of an object, travelling can be done on foot. Pressing the forward key brings the front view into sharp relief and shows the next planet section. Left and right movements (or even a full 180 degree turn) are shown as a bearing at the top of the screen.

The Emerald Planet is largely uninhabited, except for a strange breed of energy-sapping robotic bugs. Energy loss can be fatal, and although there *is* a means of replenishing it, killing the robots is a far better method of staying alive. A Laser Pulse Gun is a handy extra when it comes to bugs – it's accessed through Weapons Mode.

Swirling patches of colour are encountered deeper in the jungle. These act as doorways to locations elsewhere on the planet. Remember there are 40 billion, so almost any name will do for a destination. Mind you, you can get lost too, so this is where the homing beacons come in. These can be dropped anywhere to be used as useful reference points – they're seen from the air as flashing squares.

The energy available to power all the equipment is limited, and the level of reserves is shown as one of the menu options, which can be accessed at any time by pressing FIRE and then the first letter of the required option.



The Explorer discovers a teleporter – will it help in the quest for spaceship parts?

CRITICISM

● **" This isn't a game . . . it's a nightmare – 40 billion locations is awesome (for awesome read ridiculous!). I've been playing for hours simply trying to find the game, and I've come to the conclusion that there isn't one; at least not one compelling enough to keep me playing any more. 'Mapping games' have never really been much fun, and the extremely short arcade sequences aren't good or frequent enough. Visually poor, *Explorer*'s initial prettiness wears off as the locations are all very similar; there's a lot of colour clash too. I'd stay well clear of it if I were you. "**

BEN

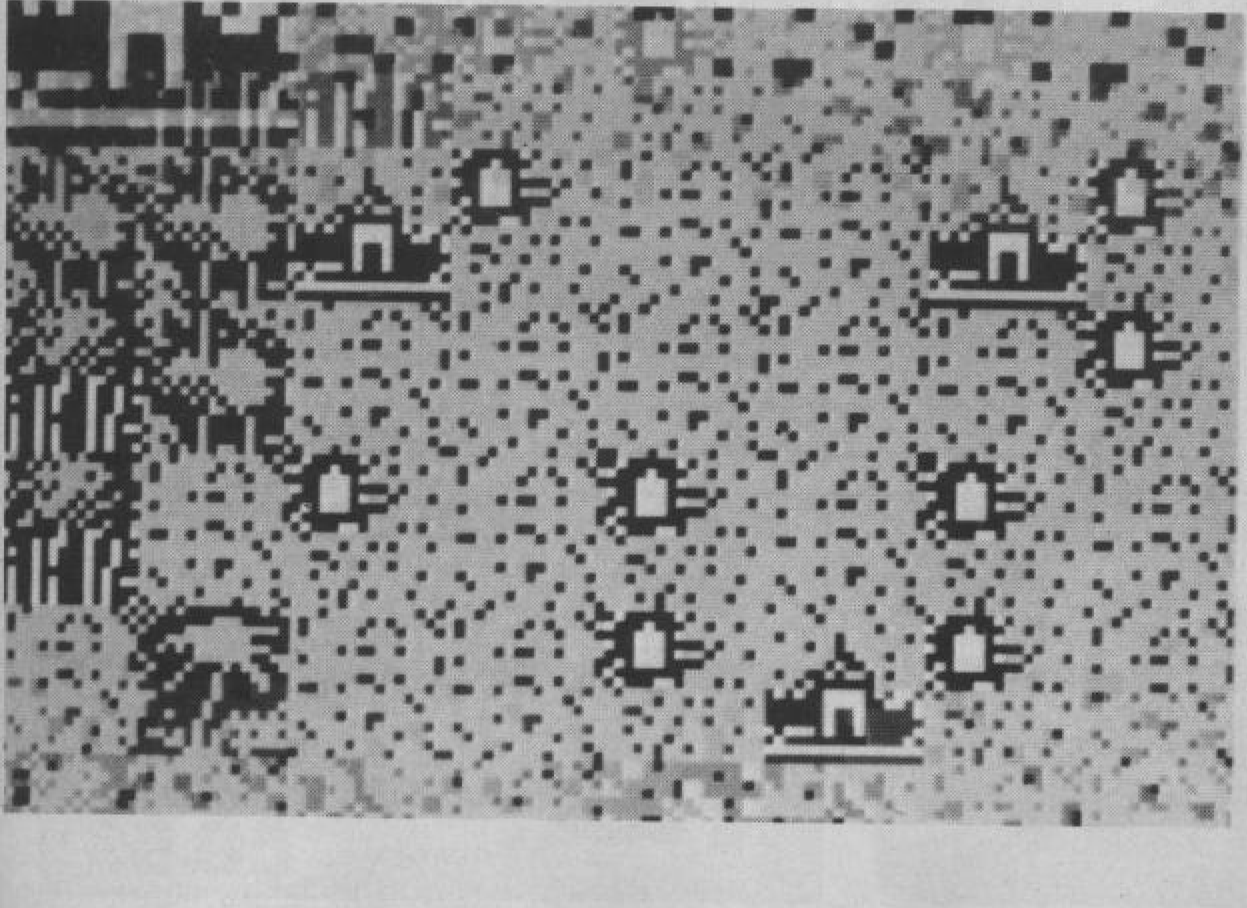
● *" It's a hefty task to find nine missing pieces in a play area of this size, even with the radio beacons. Do they really think that some poor player is actually going to trudge around forty billion locations?* RAM JAM *write some pretty weird and original programs, and this is their weirdest yet.* Explorer *is well presented with good magnify and wobble screen routines. The backgrounds are very originally drawn, and look like nothing I've seen on the Spectrum. Unfortunately, what could have been a good idea has been drowned by a massive play area with little variation. "*

PAUL

● " Okay, a game with a name like *Explorer* ought to have a lot of locations, and the way in which RAM JAM have written this means that it isn't difficult to get through a heck of a lot of them, but even so; 40 BILLION! One billion would have been enough! The graphics are pleasantly coloured, if a little monotonous, but (unsurprisingly) the game has a tendency, to get boring after a while. *Explorer* isn't a stunningly good game; I reckon that a bit less dedication to size, and more attention to gameplay might have worked much better. "

MIKE

A jet-packing explorer's view of the Emerald planet



COMMENTS

Control keys: on the ground: 6 turn to the left, 7 turn to the right, 8 180 degree turn, 9 move in the direction of your compass bearing. In the air: 6 west, 7 east, 8 south, 9 north
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: very jungle-ish
Graphics: attractive, but it's sometimes hard to see what's going on
Sound: very little
Skill levels: one
Screens: would you believe – 40 billion?
General rating: Gargantuan, awesome, actually quite fun for a while, but devastating in the end, and ultimately a bit monotonous.

Presentation	62%
Graphics	60%
Playability	38%
Addictive qualities	33%
Value for money	44%
Overall	32%

ACE OF ACES

Producer: US Gold
Retail Price: **£8.99**
Author: **Accolade**

The Mosquito (the plane, not the insect) has starred in many a daring WWII film. Now US Gold offers you a chance to try your hand at one of the oddest and most successful flying machines in the Allied arsenal.

Built almost entirely from wood, the Mosquito was heavily armed, fast, and quite manoeuvrable for its size. It was used whenever a few tons of high explosives delivered accurately would be more use than a lot of TNT spread all over the place.

To become an ace of aces, you must show your ability at flying four different sorts of missions: bomber interception, V1 flying-bomb interception, U-Boat Pen bombing and train busting.

The program loads in two parts.

First, decisions are made as to what missions, or combination of missions, are to be flown, and the Mosquito needs to be armed accordingly. An intelligence screen is displayed, giving directions of targets and likely opposition. Armament consists of cannon, rockets, bombs and drop tanks (to extend the range of the bomber). As much armament as desired can be loaded, but the plane becomes less responsive as it is weighed down.

After selecting mission and armament, the next section of the game is loaded.

Five screens control the Mosquito. In the cockpit is the joystick and forward-firing cannon and rockets. Instruments show altitude, heading, speed and attitude. There's also a radar screen showing attacking enemy craft and their relative height. A diagram of the plane is present on all the screens warning the pilot of any problems on other screens.

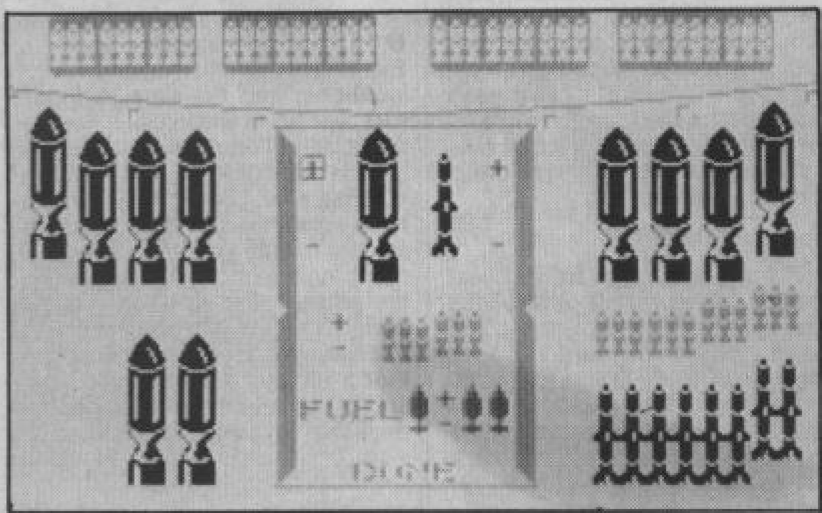
Two screens look out over either wing. These control the engines. Throttle and boost controls adjust propeller speed and pitch, making the plane go faster or slower. Flaps and undercarriage can be raised or lowered to suddenly change the plane's speed and shake off attackers. The trim control is used if one of the engines has packed up. It 'feathers' the prop and prevents the machine from going round in circles. There's also a fire extinguisher to be used if an engine catches fire and has to be doused – however this puts the engine out of commission.

A map screen shows the Mosquito's position and that of any targets to be attacked. The bomb bay screen is used during bombing missions. When the bomb bays are opened, targets can be seen below you. To bomb a target, the plane's speed is reduced to 100 knots and height to 1000 feet. Then, when the target is visible through the bomb bay doors, a cross hair is moved over the target and the bombs dropped.

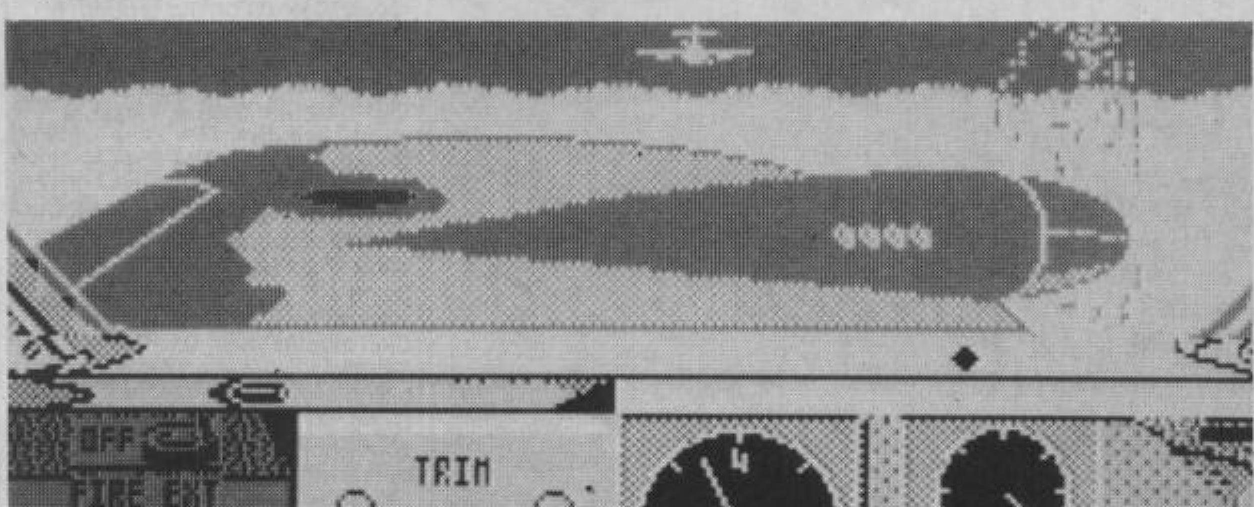
Except for the control stick on the first screen, all controls are used by moving a dot cursor over the appropriate icon – using left and right keys, then holding the fire button down and using the up and down control keys.

After completing a mission, the Mosquito heads back home. There is no landing sequence, you just have to fly over the home base. Points are scored for targets destroyed and any spare ammo brought safely home.

Give us the tools and we'll finish the job . . . the mosquito's arming screen



A German fighter attacks off the port wing



CRITICISM

● **" US GOLD have taken the two aspects of Spectrum gaming that I hate most, flight sims and multi-load, and created one of those totally unplayable horrid games. *Ace of Aces* is further sullied by difficulty, it is extremely hard to get into. Even if you do manage to get involved, the gameplay isn't enough to keep even the most avid player bashing away for long. The graphics are fairly good, the sense of motion created by sheets of clouds scrolling forward works very well. I can't really recommend this – it's too much money for too little gameplay. "**

BEN

● *" What is this game trying to be? The* Top Gun *of the 1940s? It's well presented, but lacks any substance or addictiveness. I really liked the idea of having the commander pointing out your options at the beginning – although it's a pity you only get one chance to pick your controls. Once the launch sequence is over I found that you had to do very little else in the game. Shooting down the enemy is easy to get used to – in fact the only bit of fun is putting out fires on the wing.* Ace of Aces *doesn't contain enough to make it worth playing for more than a few days. "*

PAUL

● " This product isn't bad, if not exactly legendary. The graphics are quite neat; the clouds flying past and under you are very well done. The cloud barrier is something often lacking from flight sims and it really adds realism. The various missions on offer give more addictivity than you'd find in most sims, but the multi-load system soon becomes a pain. That said, US GOLD have finally picked up on the potential of *Dambusters*, and made a much more playable game. Worth looking at if you haven't already got 50 thousand flying games on your shelf . . . "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: 1–4 selects view; M map, O left, P right, Q up, A down, X fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: bland but functional
Graphics: atmospheric skyscapes, and detailed cockpit interior
Sound: Good spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: five
General rating: Nicely detailed, but generally unplayable flight simulation.

Presentation	77%
Graphics	68%
Playability	59%
Addictive Qualities	62%
Value for money	55%
Overall	62%

BRIAN CLOUGH'S FOOTBALL FORTUNES

Producer: CDS
Retail Price: **£14.99**
Author: **The CDS team**

Well Brian, me and the lads got together, and well, there it was in the back of the net – something a bit different, a board game where the computer acts as ref.

Two to five players each take a team. The remaining teams are controlled by the computer, which generates a squad for each player. This consists of a goalkeeper, four defenders, three mid–fielders, three forwards and two versatile players. Versatile players can play in any position (however, their star rating is reduced to one if they play in goal). All players have a star rating between one and five, although initially, only footballers with values from one to four are issued. These are represented by cards which are given to the players. The remaining cards are then mixed together and placed in the middle of the board. Players also receive £20,000.

The computer now shakes the dice for the players in turn. Each player moves a counter round the board, landing on squares which either give penalties or bonuses. Players may also land on auction squares. When this happens, the top card from the stack of footballers is turned over. All players now bid. Sometimes players will land on a square which entitles them to only pay half price in the subsequent auction.

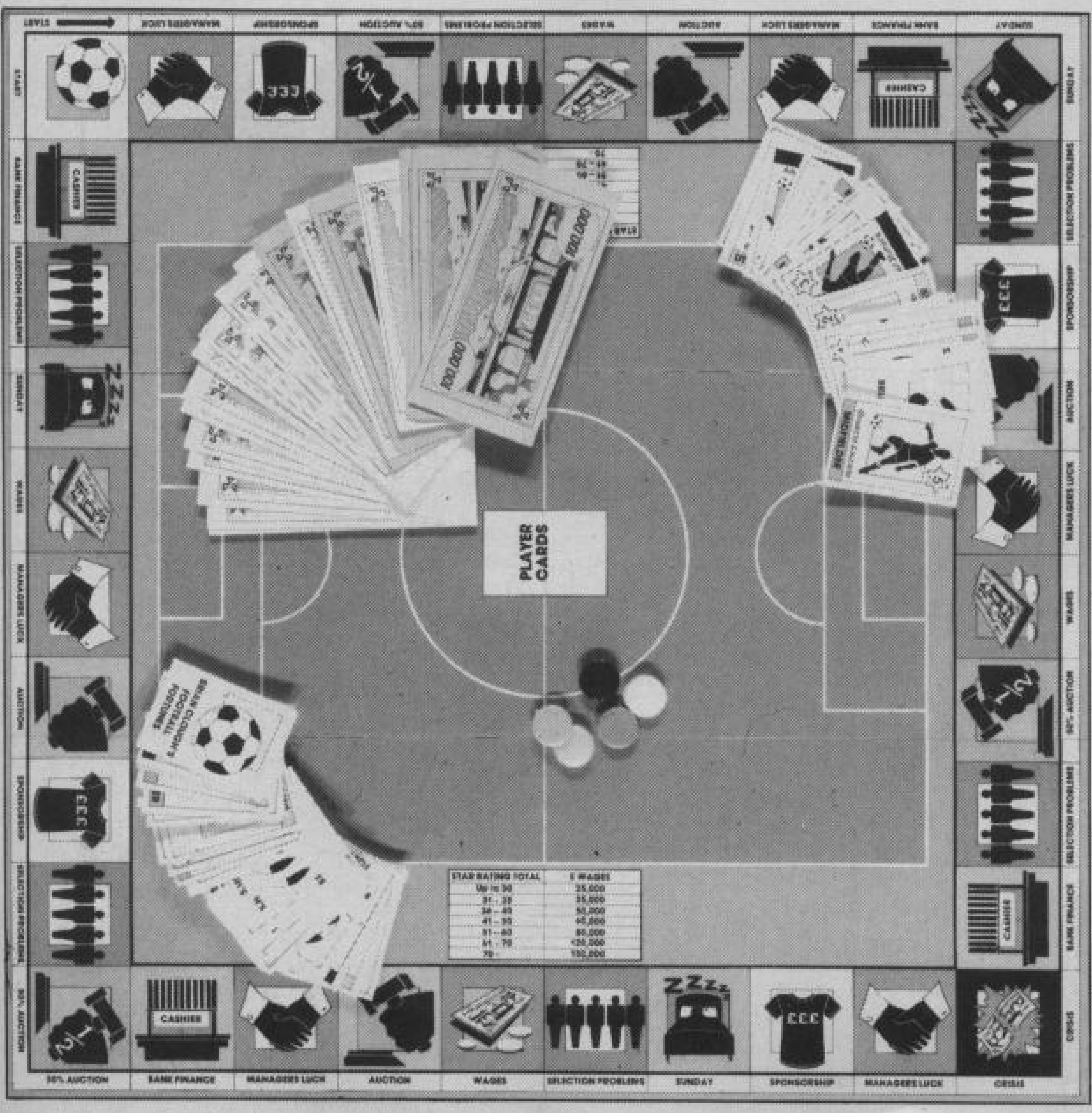
Footballers can be sold or loaned between players. When this happens, the squad is rearranged to give the same 1–4–3–3 formation with which it started. After all the players have made a move on the board, a round of matches is played. Players type in the total attack and defence strengths of their squads. The attack strength is the total star rating of the attack and midfield players; the defence is the sum of the defenders and the goalkeeper. After that, the computer works out the results of the matches. Players then receive gate money, depending on how interesting the fixture was.

Play then alternates between a move on the board and a match. Apart from adjudicating the matches, the computer holds a list of the cards for 'selection problems' and 'manager's luck'. Should a player land on one of these squares, the computer 'turns over' the next card, and the manager follows its instructions. Some represent cash penalties, so it's important not to overstretch yourself by bidding too highly in the auctions, or there may be insufficient funds to cover a penalty. If the penalty can't be met by selling footballers to other players, the manager is bankrupt and out of the game.

Players can check their current league position from the program's main menu, they can also inspect the last cards drawn and the last or the next league fixtures.

After the first season, managers enter European competitions. Here teams face tougher opposition, but the rewards are correspondingly greater.

Players decide at the start of the game how many seasons the game will last. At the end of this period, the manager with the greatest number of management points wins. Management points are scored by doing well in the League or Cup competitions. Players also score a few points for cash in hand at the end of the game – but this is a fairly minor factor.



CRITICISM

● **" Golly! Football Monotony with a computer to keep score. I was wondering how long it would be before something like this came along. I've played this a fair number of times over the last few weeks, and I think it's boring. The overall package is spoiled by the software (more than likely written in BASIC) which runs painfully slowly and looks 'unfinished'. I'm sure that the game would be as much fun if the whole computer idea was dropped and its job was replaced by a couple of dice, a set of chance cards and a score pad. For the price this may interest board gamers, but I wouldn't recommend it. "**

BEN

● *" In the past CDS have always come out with some good thinking-games. However,* Football Fortunes *requires very little thought to play. It's just a case of whoever gets the first few half price auctions is well on the way to winning the game. The computer side of the package contains a very shabby bit of software. Overall I would say that* Football Fortunes *is too over-priced to enjoy playing for long. As a computer game it contains little appeal to validate the large asking price. "*

PAUL

● " Is this one for the board gamers or the bored gamers I ask myself. This is neither a particularly good game or a good computer program. The computer side of it runs very slowly. There seems to be far too much luck involved, once one person gets ahead it's almost impossible to stop them as success leads to more success. It might provide a bit of fun for an evening or two, but that's not much for this sort of price tag. Sorry Brian, I'm going to kick this one into touch. "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: menu selection, 0–9
Joystick: none
Use of colour: hardly any
Graphics: a series of menus and printed results
Sound: none
Skill levels: four
Screens: 20
General rating:

Presentation	70%
Graphics	15%
Playability	65%
Addictive qualities	40%
Value for money	23%
Overall	42%

TOP THIRTY FOR MARCH

No less than eight new entries this month, four of them making a debut and the other four re-entering. The biggest impact is made by GAUNTLET, crashing straight into the Number Four slot and not far behind, in the early teens, come SCOOBY DOO, STARGLIDER and SPACE HARRIER. Elite still hold the Number One slot but their grip on the chart seems to be slipping as THE GREAT ESCAPE and URIDIUM and, of course, GAUNTLET all move up preparing an assault on the top spot. What will happen? Tune into Radio Hotline next month and find out . . .

Top off the pile of voting forms this month was the slip sent in by David Singer of Cheltenham who collects the £40 prize. Runners up, who receive hats and T-Shirts in time for Spring are R Payne of Redditch, D Stephenson of Milton Keynes, Neil McDowall of Salisbury, and Graham Pugh who is a Cardiff lad.

The HOTLINE AND ADVENTURE CHART compiled from the votes of CRASH readers is the most realistic chart for gauging the popularity of Spectrum games — it is the games that are being played that get the votes, not the games that are in the shops this week or month.

And the votes are important. It's up to you to let us know what you feel, so fill in the voting forms that live on the Results pages and make your voice heard. Well, make your writing readable — there's no longer a phoneline voting service.

If you don't want to carve up your copy of CRASH, we understand. Use a photocopy if you like, or copy out the details from the voting forms onto a nice clean sheet of paper and send that to us instead.

Apart from the satisfaction of registering your opinion, there's always the chance of winning a rather interesting prize. Once the information has been taken from the forms we receive during the course of the month, ten voting slips are drawn out for special consideration by Auntie Aggie — five from the Adventure Ballot Box and five from the Hotline Ballot Box.

A top prize of £40 worth of software (your choice, not ours) and a CRASH T Shirt is awarded to the first slip out of the draw from the Hotline votes, and another £40 worth of goodies and a Shirt goes to the Hotline Draw winner.

Four runners up from each ballot collect a CRASH T Shirt and a CRASH Hat, so get those votes in to the CRASH HOTLINE and CRASH ADVENTURE TRAIL, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.

Hotline Top 30

1 *(1)*	**PAPERBOY**	ELITE
2 *(4)*	**THE GREAT ESCAPE**	OCEAN
3 *(5)*	**URIDIUM**	HEWSON
4 *(-)*	**GAUNTLET**	US GOLD
5 *(8)*	**MATCH DAY**	OCEAN
6 *(9)*	**BOMBJACK**	ELITE
7 *(13)*	**COBRA**	OCEAN
8 *(2)*	**GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS**	ELITE
9 *(3)*	**LIGHTFORCE**	FTL
10 *(6)*	**COMMANDO**	ELITE
11 *(7)*	**ELITE**	FIREBIRD
12 *(10)*	**FIRELORD**	HEWSON
13 *(12)*	**QUAZATRON**	HEWSON
14 *(-)*	**SCOOBY DOO**	ELITE
15 *(-)*	**STARGLIDER**	RAINBIRD
16 *(-)*	**SPACE HARRIER**	ELITE
17 *(16)*	**GREEN BERET**	IMAGINE
18 *(11)*	**DAN DARE**	VIRGIN
19 *(22)*	**TRAPDOOR**	PIRANHA
20 *(-)*	**LORDS OF MIDNIGHT**	BEYOND
21 *(14)*	**TRIVIAL PURSUIT**	DOMARK
22 *(-)*	**ALIENS**	ELECTRIC DREAMS
23 *(-)*	**DOOMDARKS REVENGE**	BEYOND
24 *(-)*	**DYNAMITE DAN II**	MIRRORSOFT
25 *(19)*	**BATMAN**	OCEAN
26 *(27)*	**BOBBY BEARING**	THE EDGE
27 *(18)*	**1942**	ELITE
28 *(15)*	**DANDY**	ELECTRIC DREAMS
29 *(26)*	**HEAVY ON THE MAGICK**	GARGOYLE GAMES
30 *(-)*	**BACK TO SKOOL**	MICROSPHERE

the Crash CHARTS

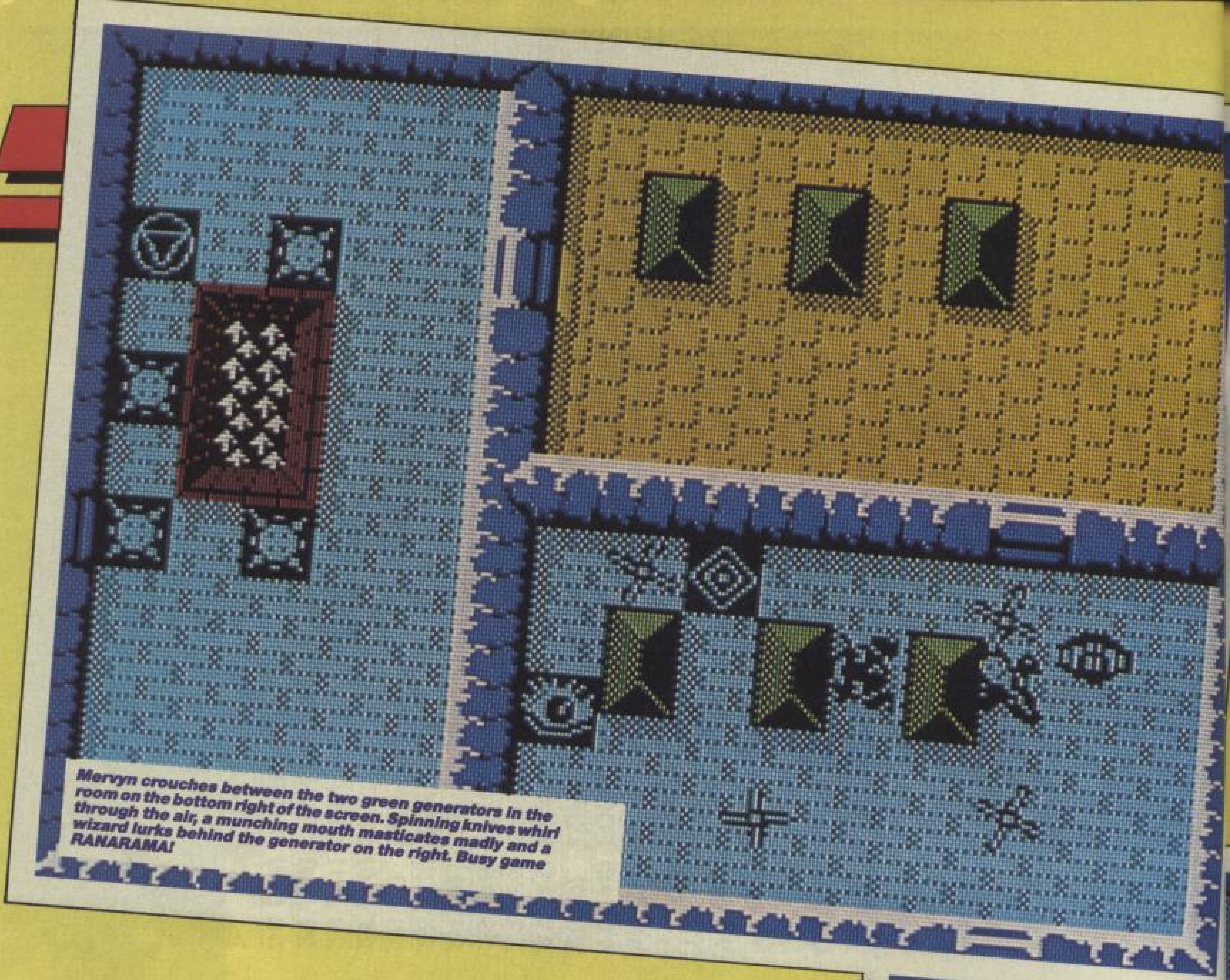
After a stunning run of six months at the top of the chart, HEAVY ON THE MAGICK has been knocked off its perch, and a surprise new entry rockets in to take its place: WORM IN PARADISE by Level 9. Another surprise new entry is FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD which comes in at Number Ten. FAIRLIGHT II trundles up fourteen places to Number Two. Apart from a couple of shock new entries, it's the old favourites that jockey for position within the chart – what will next month bring?

The winner of this month's £40 worth of Adventure Chart software is Jeremy Conner who lives in Tyne and Wear. Four runners up each get hats and T-Shirts for when the warm weather arrives. The quartet of winners comprises Jon Sendel from Sheffield, Robin Cavill from Dewsbury, West Yorks, P Carney from Cumbria and Ian Bowater from Warley, West Midlands.

Adventure Top 30

1	(-)	**WORM IN PARADISE**	LEVEL 9
2	(15)	**FAIRLIGHT II**	THE EDGE
3	(2)	**THE BOGGIT**	CRL
4	(1)	**HEAVY ON THE MAGICK**	GARGOYLE GAMES
5	(13)	**PRICE OF MAGIK**	LEVEL 9
6	(5)	**SPELLBOUND**	MASTERTRONIC
7	(8)	**DOOMDARKS REVENGE**	BEYOND
8	(17)	**RED MOON**	LEVEL 9
9	(22)	**SEA BASE DELTA**	FIREBIRD
10	(-)	**FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD**	OCEAN
11	(3)	**KNIGHT TYME**	MASTERTRONIC
12	(27)	**HAMPSTEAD**	MELBOURNE HOUSE
13	(10)	**MINDSTONE**	THE EDGE
14	(20)	**DUN DARACH**	GARGOYLE GAMES
15	(4)	**FAIRLIGHT**	THE EDGE
16	(16)	**RED HAWK**	MELBOURNE HOUSE
17	(12)	**BORED OF THE RINGS**	SILVERSOFT
18	(24)	**MARSPORT**	GARGOYLE GAMES
19	(18)	**FOURTH PROTOCOL**	CENT/HUTCHINSON
20	(9)	**LORD OF THE RINGS**	MELBOURNE HOUSE
21	(21)	**DRAGONTORC**	HEWSON
22	(30)	**SPIDERMAN**	ADVENTURE INTERNATIONAL
23	(26)	**ENIGMA FORCE**	BEYOND
24	(6)	**LORDS OF MIDNIGHT**	BEYOND
25	(28)	**KENTILLA**	MASTERTRONIC
26	(7)	**THE HOBBIT**	MELBOURNE HOUSE
27	(19)	**SHADOWFIRE**	BEYOND
28	(11)	**GREMLINS**	ADVENTURE INTERNATIONAL
29	(14)	**TIR NA NOG**	GARGOYLE GAMES
30	(23)	**SHERLOCK**	MELBOURNE HOUSE





Mervyn crouches between the two green generators in the room on the bottom right of the screen. Spinning knives whirl through the air, a munching mouth masticates madly and a wizard lurks behind the generator on the right. Busy game RANARAMA!



The wizard combat screen, in which you have to play a magical form of Scrabble



In the yellow room, Mervyn waits to take on
Fire Gollum and a Bisect

R·A·N·A·R·A·M·A

A CRASH Smash

Mervyn is a sorceror's apprentice – well actually, at the moment he's a frog! A new spell that he was trying out was supposed to make him irresistable to women, but it went horribly wrong and he was left hopping about in amphibian form. This was fortunate however – shortly after he messed up his macho magic, Mervyn's dungeon was invaded by war-mongering wizards who killed everything in sight except Mervyn, believing him to be a harmless frog.

The dungeon is packed with wizards and their evil minions, and as if that wasn't enough, generators situated around the mazes of rooms that make up the levels spew forth magical weapons. Mervyn has to kill 96 wizards before his task is complete – 12 evil magicians on each level.

The screen gives an overhead view of the room Mervyn currently occupies, showing the adjacent rooms that he has already visited. Between 50 and 100 rooms make up a single level, and they have all been plunged into darkness. As Mervyn enters a room it is flooded with light, and remains lit for the rest of the game. Rooms are connected by doorways, some of which are invisible: the position of a portal is made clear when a wizard negotiates a hidden door, or a special spell can be invoked to reveal the entries and exits.

Mervyn tackles the wizards by bumping into them. Colliding with a magician takes the player into a sub-game where the letters of the word RANARAMA are jumbled onto the screen. Pairs of letters may be swapped by moving a cursor over them and pressing fire – the aim is to sort them into the correct order within a time limit and thus defeat the wizard. When the wizard dies, he sheds useful runes – these only last a short time, so Mervyn has to scurry round and pick them up before their power wanes. Runes may be converted and used to boost missile and shield strength, or exchanged for components of spells or extra energy. Losing the battle with a wizard results in a loss of spell power or death.

Designs found on the floor of the dungeon are called Glyphs and come in four varieties – pressing fire when Mervyn is standing on a Glyph activates it. A Glyph of Seeing reveals a map of the room that you have visited; a Glyph of Power activates a spell which acts as a 'smart bomb'; Way Glyphs act as teleporters, transporting Mervyn to another level; while a Glyph of Sorcery allows Mervyn to examine the magical status screen that displays a list of runes collected. This also indicates the spells that Mervyn is using and allows him to exchange runes for additional powers.

Four types of spell are available: Power, Attack, Defence and Effect – and spells have eight levels of potency. As Mervyn progresses through the eight levels of the dungeon he encounters more powerful adversaries, and spells of the appropriate level of potency are required to deal with them.

Mervyn's energy is drained as he moves around the dungeon, and the energy loss is more rapid when higher-level spells are used. Contact with the evil wizards and their minions also saps energy, but strength can be replenished by bumping into one of the floating energy crystals or by exchanging runes for a new power spell.

Points are awarded for killing Magical Minions and for eliminating the Generators that produce Magic Weapons, but Mervyn must have appropriately powerful spells before attacking the denizens. Blasting an eighth-level creature with sixth-level magic only serves to make it madder!

Should Mervyn manage to massacre all 96 magicians he wins his freedom – and with any luck a spell to turn him back into human form will be thrown into the package . . .



...on a DwarfWarrior, a

CRITICISM

" I grimaced when I heard that HEWSON were doing a Gauntlet **variant – there are so many around at the moment that I'm getting bored of them. This however is more than just another clone – to my mind,** Ranarama **is the most playable game that has arrived for review this month. Fighting off the multitude of dungeon minions makes roaming the playing area really frantic, and the gameplay is straightforward enough to make it compelling from the word go. Some of** Ranarama's **ideas are perhaps a little too similar to those used in** Paradroid **and** Quazatron, **but the overall gameplay certainly makes it well worth the asking price.**

BEN

CRITICISM

" HEWSON have taken an existing idea and improved on it. The Gauntlet **style has been beautifully incorporated into what is basically a shoot 'em up extravaganza. The icons on the detailed floors are very easy to use, and well distinguished from each other – despite their size. Fitting more than one room on each screen is a clever idea, and makes the game appear much larger than it really is. My only gripe is that the frog can be a bit unresponsive in some situations, but apart from that there seems little wrong with** Ranarama. **"**

PAUL

CRITICISM

" Although Ranarama **isn't the most addictive game I have ever played, it is certainly a game that ought to last for a long time. The graphics are very reminiscent of US GOLD's** Gauntlet, **but are slightly better; colour has been splashed about liberally, and the characters are reasonably animated (if a little small). Steve Turner has done himself justice, with what has turned out to be a highly playable program. The instructions were not all they could have been – for instance the art of rune-swapping could have been better explained. But that apart, this is a great game – one to buy, people! "**

MIKE

Producer: Hewsons
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Steve Turner**

COMMENTS

Control keys: A–G up; Z–C,F fire; B,N left; M,SYMBOL SHIFT right; H–L fire; P pause; W toggle autofire.
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: colourful screen with monochromatic characters
Graphics: good animation, but can get messy
Sound: good spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: eight scrolling levels
General rating: the most innovative of the *Gauntlet* clones

Presentation	84%
Graphics	88%
Playability	91%
Addictive qualities	91%
Value for money	89%
Overall	90%

LEAGUE CHALLENGE

Producer: Atlantis
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Nigel Edwards**

Once again it's your chance to manage your very own soccer team. *League Challenge* puts you in charge of a lowly Fourth Division club, and sets you the task of building them up into a powerful force in the world of football.

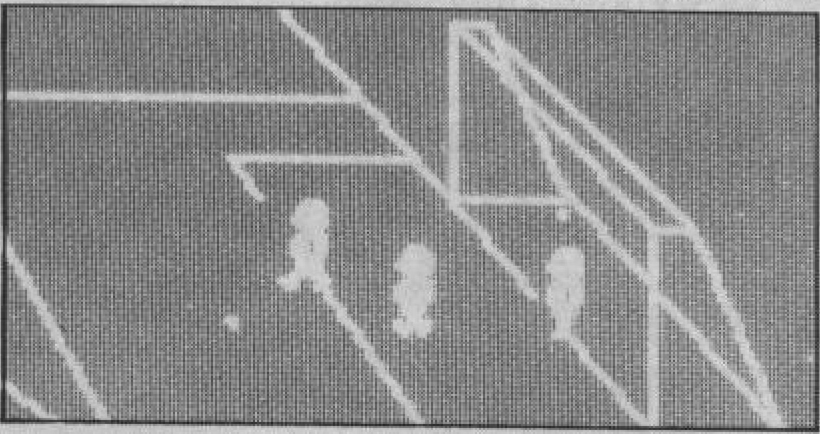
Play kicks off with the newly-installed manager naming his club. The computer then assigns a panel of 12 players, divided into three categories: defence; midfield and attack, each has a personal fitness level rated between one and nine.

strengthen the team.

The team's training schedule is chosen before each match. There are three different levels of training: Moderate; Vigorous and Intense. As their names suggest, these vary in effectiveness – consequently they also become progressively more expensive.

Saturday's match follows the 'weekly' preparations, with the game displayed as an animated action sequence. During play, the manager can only sit tight in the dugout and wait for the verdict. The results of all the league matches are displayed, and the league table is worked out.

As team manager, the club's financial position is in your hands.



Goalmouth action, as Cameron's Bulldozers take on Exeter

A season consists of 15 league matches, plus FA Cup fixtures. The computer then totals the skill levels of the chosen team, and adds up the total fitness of all players. It then displays the team's combined strength alongside the strength of the opposition. From these figures, the manager can work out if he still needs to

Incurring debts of over £250,000 bankrupts a club, sending the team back to its starting position at the bottom of the league.

At the end of the season the top three clubs are promoted and the bottom three demoted – a cash bonus is awarded to the manager depending on the season's performance.

LEAGUE TABLE DIV 4

PS	TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
1	Southend	11	7	1	3	24	20	22
2	Torquay	11	6	2	3	25	18	20
3	Exeter	11	6	2	3	26	20	20
4	Swindon	11	5	3	3	24	18	18
5	BULLDOZERS	11	4	4	3	20	15	16
6	Bury	11	5	1	5	21	17	16
7	Chester	11	5	1	5	23	22	16
8	Cambridge	11	4	3	4	28	24	15
9	Port Vale	11	4	3	4	19	24	15
10	Swansea	11	4	2	5	23	23	14
11	Newport	11	4	2	5	22	25	14
12	Halifax	11	3	4	4	23	21	13
13	Stockport	11	4	1	6	22	24	13
14	Crewe	11	3	3	5	26	37	12
15	Hereford	11	3	3	5	18	29	12
16	Orient	11	2	3	6	23	30	9

'C' TO CONTINUE

Fifth from the top after 11 games, will Cameron take his team to Division Three?

CRITICISM

● " **This is a real step backwards for football management games. It has been several years since ADDICTIVE released their classic** Football Manager, **and still after all this time no-one has managed to improve on it.** League Challenge **is slow, unrealistic and very monotonous. There is nothing about it that even remotely impresses me. The 'action' is tedious, and the bits in between are pointless. I couldn't recommend this. Even at its low price it still offers bad value for money.** "

BEN

● " *As if the old* Football Manager *wasn't bad enough,* ATLANTIS *have come up with a sub-standard product that's even worse. The graphics don't really deserve the name – they are very simply drawn, inaccurate and unanimated. There are no new boundaries broken – it's just a case of progressing through a few menus and hoping that you'll win. Different team selections make little or no difference to the outcome of the matches.* League Challenge *holds little appeal – even for the most earnest football fan.* "

PAUL

● " *League Challenge* is boring. The only respite from the drab text-only screen displays are the completely awful match highlights. The characters are badly drawn, the animation is abysmal and the colour choice is even worse. As far as football manager games go, this one is very average, and certainly contains nothing new. Fans of the type might well find it reasonable (especially with its price tag of £1.99), but I think it's very poor. "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: menu format, using keys listed
Joystick: n/a
Responsiveness: not applicable
Use of colour: effective for text highlighting, poor during 'match' sequences
Graphics: poorly drawn match-stick-men footballers
Sound: minimal spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: ten
General rating: A frustratingly tedious football management simulation

Presentation	49%
Graphics	18%
Playability	29%
Addictive qualities	25%
Value for money	33%
Overall	28%

MEGA BUCKS

Producer: Firebird
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Ivan Horn**

Rock Carrington one of those guys you just can't stand at parties. Young, handsome, and in line to inherit a fortune from his eccentric and recently deceased uncle, Professor Maxbillion III.

Fancy free, and never having done a day's honest work in his life, Rock has been enjoying the life of the idle rich on the strength of his impending inheritance. But at last, the creditors are closing in and Rock has actually got to go into the prof's home and get his hands on the readies.

This is where the trouble starts. The old professor was incredibly mean – *and* rather devious. To see whether Rock is worthy of the lolly, Maxbillion laid a series of traps for his unsuspecting nephew.

The maze that comprises the mansion and its grounds consists of a series of rooms, viewed from the side. Rock ambles about this, picking up objects. Pressing fire brings up a screen containing eight icons: Quit; Abort; Pick up; Drop; Use; Pause and Return to the game. Accessing the object-handling icons brings up a further screen showing the objects carried

After the initial trap, where our hero stands a chance of being gassed, it is a question of collecting and using pieces of equipment to gain entrance to parts of the maze that are initially inaccessible. Rampant robots and man-eating plants have to be evaded. Energy and time are in short supply, although some objects replenish energy.

The final aim is to find a video tape which shows where the money is hidden. The clue to its location lies in a painting hanging in the house, and sections of the painting are obtained for solving certain key puzzles.

CRITICISM

● " **FIREBIRD have come up with a cracker in the form of** Mega Bucks. **I must say that I found it a little tricky to begin with, but after a fair amount of raving, and lots of trial-and-error this game became rewarding and fun to play. In gameplay and plot this could be a great rival to one of David Jones' masterpieces** (Knight Tyme **and the like). The graphics are similar to those used in the** Wally **trilogy – there are a few colour problems but everything else has been well drawn. The sound is surprisingly good, with a reasonable tune on**



Accessing the icon window reveals that the would-be Rich Kid hasn't got anything to pick up. The message window rubs it in . . .

the title screen and well above-average effects during the game.

BEN

● " *Another excuse for another Silver Range arcade adventure game. I wonder why* FIREBIRD *can't bring out some good original games.* Mega Bucks *contains all the budget favourites. Lots of colour, smart graphics and lots of options. Sound is limited to a few spot beeps. A tune running through the game would have suited it well – but alas there isn't one. Sadly I found* Mega Bucks *boring to play, as there is very little to keep the player addicted to it for long. It may look nice, but the game holds little appeal.* "

PAUL

● " *Mega Bucks* looks very suspiciously like a game from the *Magic Knight* trilogy. I'm not particularly keen on it, as the game isn't as playable as it should be – even for two quid – and it loses out far too much on addictivity. The tune on the title screen is annoying, and the game sounds aren't anything above spot effects. The graphics are below standard, and too much colour has been used. The icons are unattractive, though recognisable. I think that FIREBIRD have skimped a bit on this one. Definitely not their best; they should have spent more time on it. "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable; up, down, left, right, access menu
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: pleasing, with few attribute problems
Graphics: pretty, with lots of detail
Sound: reasonable title tune, but sparse spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: 72
General rating: Should appeal to fans of David Jones' type of games.

Presentation	68%
Graphics	67%
Playability	65%
Addictive qualities	59%
Value for money	74%
Overall	**66%**

NUCLEAR COUNTDOWN

Producer: Atlantis
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Adrian Longland**

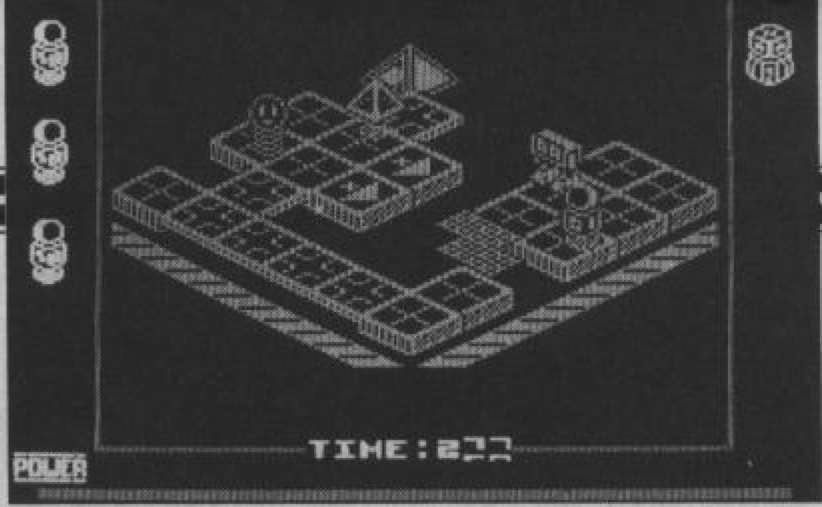
It's back to the old 'nuclear reactor going crazy' scenario. One thing games designers never tire of is the prospect of some hideous nuclear accident dumping radioactivity all over the place. Once again, you are at the controls trying to stop the world from glowing in the dark.

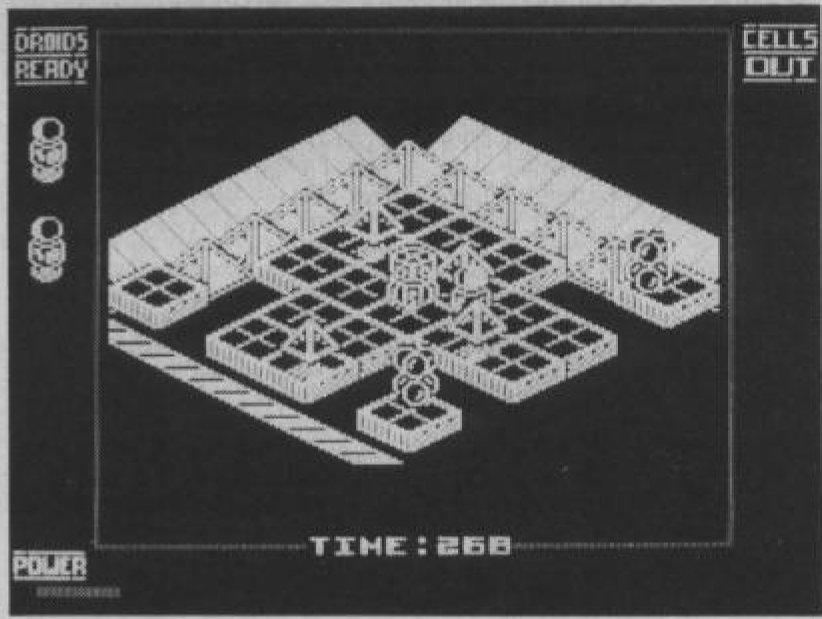
Naturally, you are not expected to go down into the trouble zone in person – you have a little robot to guide around and do the dirty work. Four nucleo cells are unstable and about to blow any second, and they have to be destroyed by nudging into them.

The game is played over a terrain displayed from an isometric 3D viewpoint, in a strange complex made up from blocks and floor sections. Some of the blocks can be shoved around, and the floor doesn't always cover the entire screen in view. Some segments drain energy while others propel your droid off in a given direction rather violently. Energy recharging points are scattered round the building.

Mutant droids inhabit the complex and come in two basic flavours: some tromp around following a set patrol path and other, really mutant robots, home in on your droid. Contact with the guard droids saps energy, which is monitored by a horizontal bar at the base of the screen.

The hero of the piece can fight back, however – he's equipped with a shield that drains energy when it's used but comes in handy for battering the baddies.





Your droid is very close to a nucleo, buried in the middle of the screen

The game is divided into four sections, one for each nucleo. Five droids are supplied, and when the current servant expires, the next mechanoid clanks off from the start of the current section.

There's no score: just a rating based on the number of nucleos neutralised. To make life that bit more difficult, the game is played against the clock.

CRITICISM

● " **Well done** ATLANTIS **– what an excellent piece of budget software. Although** Nuclear Countdown **is far too easy to offer much in the way of lasting appeal, I'll be hooked until I complete it: it is really playable and ever so compelling. The graphics are slick – the backgrounds are excellently detailed and the characters move around smoothly. The sound leaves a little to be desired – the effects are good, but there is no tune whatsoever. Overall, I think that this is well worth its two quid price tag. Go and buy it.** "

BEN

● " *A great little game from* ATLANTIS. *Even though monochromatic graphics are the order of the day, this is an addictive and very playable game. Presentation is superb with a neat pause mode and some good sound effects. All the characters are very well drawn, contain lots of detail and are well animated. I found* Nuclear Countdown *very easy to get into – but unfortunately a bit too easy to complete. If you want a great little budget game with strong hints of* Highway Encounter *then this could be for you. I certainly enjoyed playing it.* "

PAUL

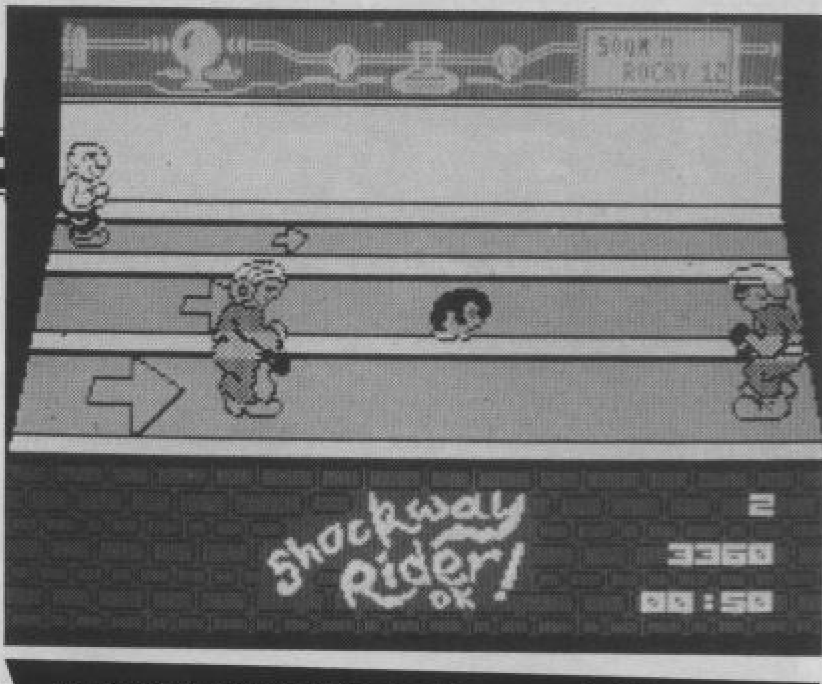
● " *Nuclear Countdown*, while it isn't exactly blazing trails in the fields of software excellence, is quite a competent little game. The graphics, although small, move quickly and smoothly, and for £1.99, I don't think that anyone will complain if I recommend it. Despite the fact that most people won't play it for the rest of their time, it is playable, and to an extent, addictive. It looks and plays very like a cheap game; I don't mean that in a negative way – don't expect too much from it. Although there is nothing particularly amazing about *Nuclear Countdown*, you might find it alright for the price. "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable; left, right, up, down, shield, pause, quit
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: monochrome
Graphics: excellent detail, good animation
Sound: good effects, no tune
Skill levels: two
Screens: 25
General rating: A very neat budget game.

Presentation	67%
Graphics	72%
Playability	70%
Addictive Qualities	68%
Value for money	78%
Overall	**72%**



Oops, Cameron's lost his head again . . . poor lamb!

SHOCKWAY RIDER

Producer: FTL
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Gargoyle Games**

Shockway Rider is the second release from 'FASTER THAN LIGHT', the offspring of GARGOYLE GAMES.

Its plot is centred in a futuristic city where walking is a thing of the past. Instead of using pavements, the inhabitants move around on vast, scrolling walkways. Crime, however, is not an unhappy memory. Muggers find in the moving pathways a cornucopia, rich with pickings. Things are bad. Inevitably an individual who's seen too many *Death Wish* films decides to take the law into his own hands, and *Shockway Rider* is about this vigilante out to clean up the mean streets. Not unlike Bronson's *Death Wish* character he isn't particular in his own morals, and sees little harm in taking out innocent by-standers at the same time.

The pedestrian pathway is the place where it's at, and on-screen it's divided up into three sections running parallel to each other. Each section moves at a different speed, and the walkways loop round in a circle. The idea is to get right round the circle killing as many characters as possible (after all, one of them must be a mugger, surely?). Movement happens by standing still, while the screen scrolls from left to right.

Completing a circuit, the player automatically progresses to the next level, of which there are eight, and each provides more disposable persons and even some nasty obstacles to avoid.

Future City's thugs are slick, and down on Moving Mean Street they're identifiable by their black gloves and natty shades. But don't be fooled by apparently innocent commuters and passers-by; that frail-looking granny may suddenly turn into a mugger. The best bet is to kill everyone!

When a mugger spots you, he jumps onto the same pathway and literally knocks your block off. Vigilanticide is as easily accomplished by jumping on top of you when off-guard.

Like the muggers, the vigilante can also jump from walkway to walkway in pursuit of prey. The three walkways are seen in perspective, so effectively the characters change size as they go further 'into' or 'out of' the screen. Fists are the main weapon, but the stationary pathways alongside are littered with usable items which come in handy as ammo. Jumping off a moving pathway onto the sidewalk and running over the item results in its being displayed at the screen base. The weaponry collected may be hurled forwards and backwards and in some cases up and down as well.

Vigilantism just ain't nice, and so bonus points are awarded for biffing innocent by-standers. For every ten inoffensive pedestrians killed, an extra life is awarded and added to the initial five.



In a bid for sweet revenge, Cameron sneaks up on the nearest granny

CRITICISM

● **" This is a bit of step backwards for FTL. I was expecting a game with the same sort of graphical quality as** Lightforce **– but alas there are no multi-coloured space ships in** Shockway Rider**. There are some pretty characters though. Not to worry, they seem to have worked on the gameplay – or perhaps it only appeals to me because you can hurl bricks at innocent by-standers (and get points for it!). Unfortunately there are only eight levels so this won't keep anyone playing for longer than a few days. "**

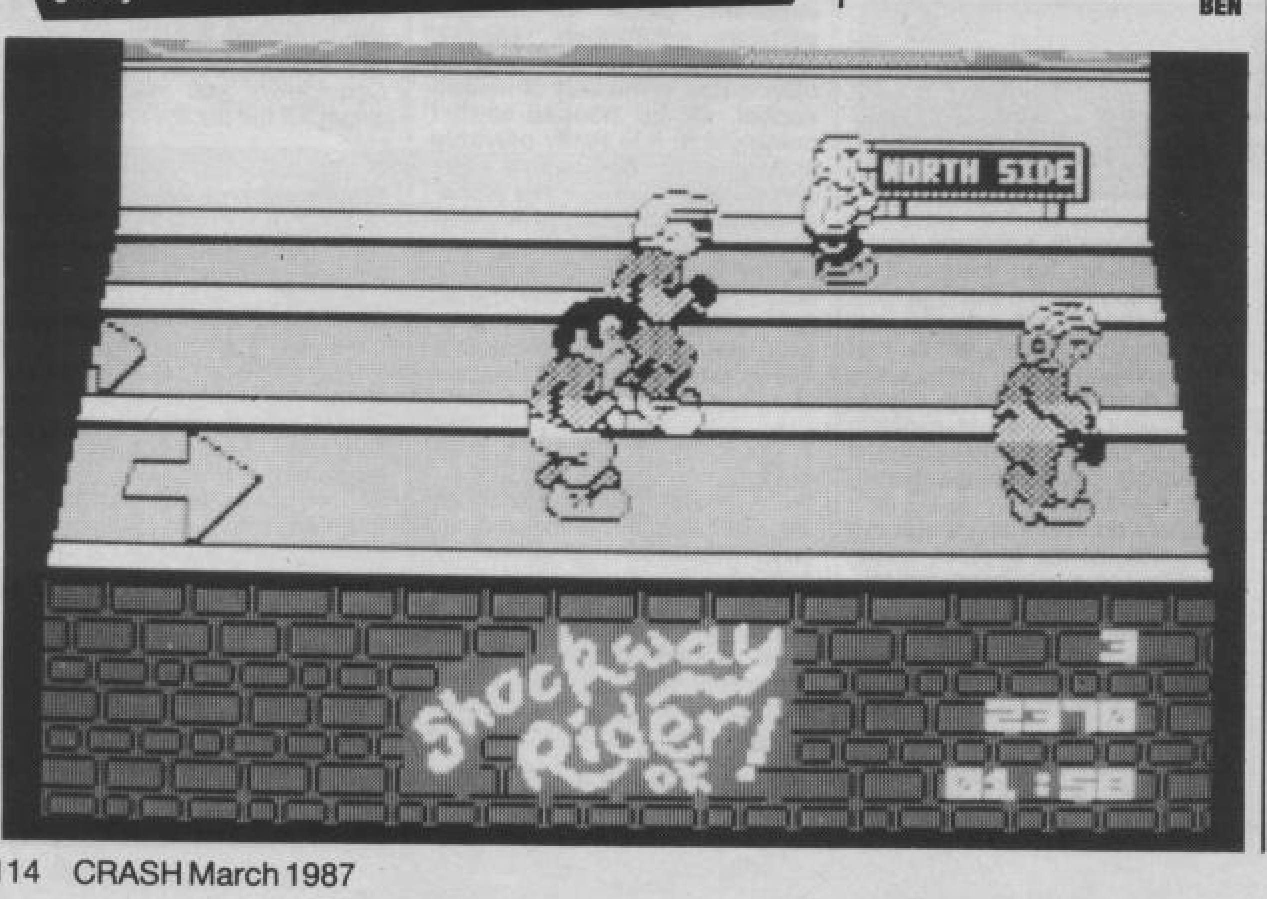
BEN

● *" I wondered how FTL could follow up a smash hit like* Lightforce *– not very well it seems. The game is, like* Lightforce*, very simple in construction. But* Shockway Rider *loses out on playability. The graphics are well drawn and backgrounds have a good feeling of perspective with the screen containing a decent amount of colour, even though the play area is monochromatic. The meanies contain lots of frames of animation, and there are good explosions when someone gets chopped. I love the way that the baddies wave their hands in the air when they chop your head off.* Shockway Rider *isn't really as good as* Lightforce*, but it certainly needs to be looked at as the game is original and quite addictive "*

PAUL

● " Despite the essentially simple idea behind it, *Shockway Rider* has turned out to be a reasonable game. Like *Lightforce*, it has excellent graphics, with colour used well, and superb scrolling: some of the character animation is brilliant. It's highly playable, but I felt that it lacked depth. The loading screen is particularly neat, and the packaging is very professional. Though by no means a poor game, *Shockway Rider* is something of a disappointment after *Lightforce*; but then most games would be! Look before buying. "

MIKE

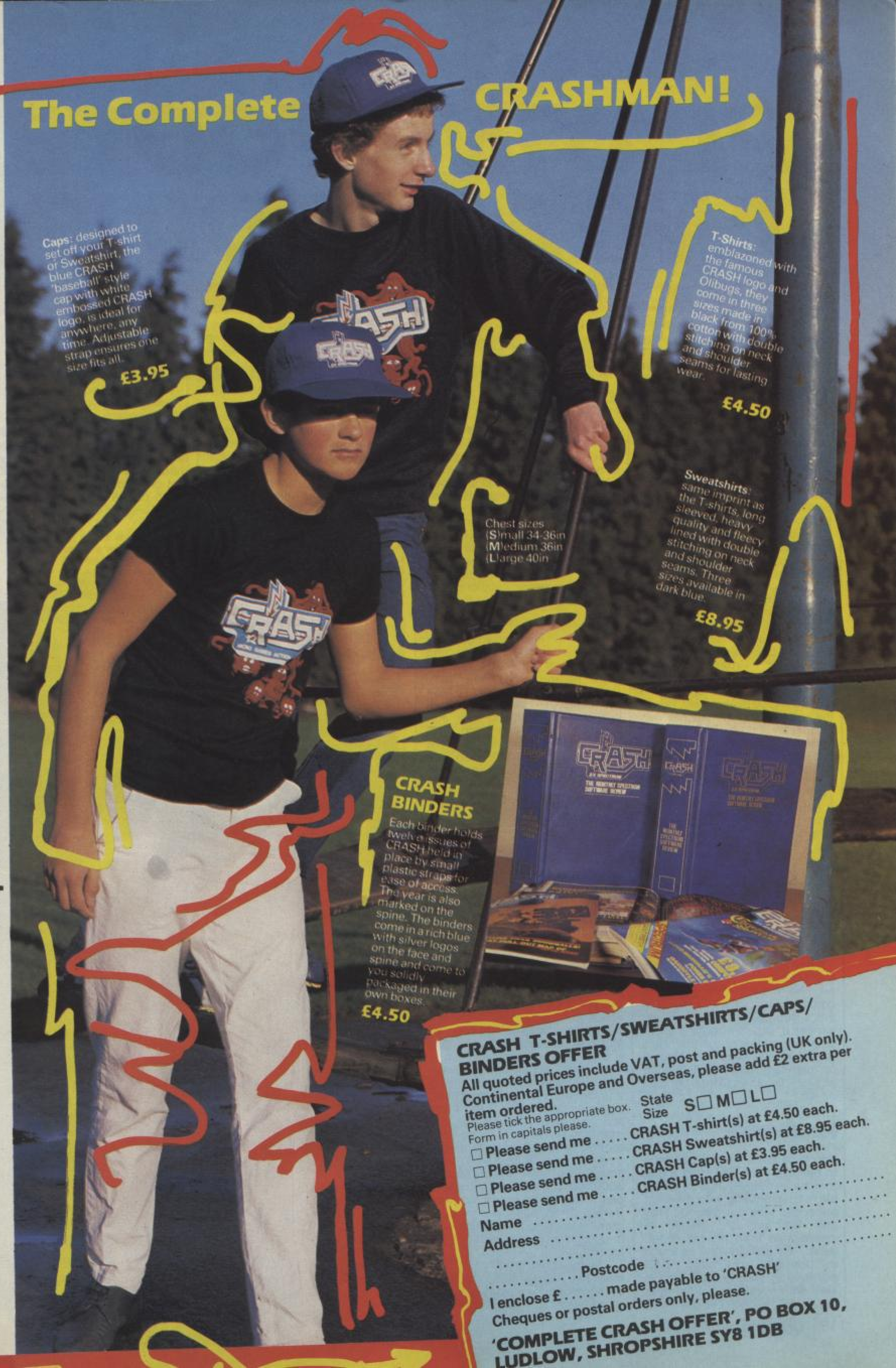


COMMENTS

Control keys: definable: up, down, left, right, fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: good with a minimal amount of colour clash
Graphics: simple and nicely animated
Sound: the odd splatty sound effect
Skill levels: one
Screens: 8 scrolling play areas
General rating: An interesting above-average game that misses the highspots of Light Force.

Presentation	73%
Graphics	75%
Playability	65%
Addictive qualities	61%
Value for money	64%
Overall	67%

Super Cool and Part of the Team with the CRASH Outfit.



PLAYING FOOTBAL[L] AND PRODDING PIX[ELS]

Lee Paddon persuaded Jon Ritman and Bernie Drummond to break a journey between London and Manchester and drop in to the Towers for a chat . . .

The graphicial capabilities of the current generation of home computers are limited, and even the most talented artist is restricted by the nature of the medium when it comes to putting art on the screen. So why did **Bernie Drummond**, the man behind *Batman*'s graphics choose a life of pixel prodding?

Well, one answer could be that there's money in it. For the latest game to emerge from the mind of **Jon Ritman**, *Head over Heals*, the advance royalties alone from OCEAN will net Bernie over £14,000. This isn't bad for someone who managed to fail his art CSE!

Bernie Drummond is unashamed about his lack of formal academic qualifications: "I failed the CSE deliberately. I knew the sort of thing the teacher was looking for and I didn't want to do it his way. I think formal art tuition is a real waste of time. You spend all your time studying other artists and learning how to use knives. That's not what interests me."

Bernie got interested in drawing when he started doodling characters from his favourite cartoon strips. One of his chief sources of inspiration was the X–Men, a group of teenagers who had mutant powers. Guided by their mentor, Professor Xaviour, the X–Men went around conquering evil. "I liked them because they were just ordinary kids, not superheroes: you could really identify with them – it was also very well drawn. I like Neil Adams a lot. It's amazing the way he moves from comic to comic, taking a really awful strip that's struggling for survival and turning it into the most popular strip in a matter of months. He's great for detail like drips of sweat on foreheads. Barry Smith's good as well – he draws Conan the Barbarian."

FELT PENS

Bernie believes that the best way to develop your own style is just to draw as many things as possible, experimenting with different materials. Like our own Oli Frey and his airbrush, Bernie is inseparable from his set of felt pens. "By just drawing as much as possible, you build up a portfolio in your head. I always start with eyes. I can draw eyes really well, so once I've got those right, I just work outwards and fill up the rest of the picture."

Bernie was playing the drums in a band called 'The Position' when Jon Ritman first bumped into him. Music is still Bernie's main interest: "I really prefer music to art – I could go on about that all day if you like." Jon was a friend of one of the other members of the band, and knew Bernie did art in his spare time. "I think I was actually sticking handles on saucepans for a living at the time."

Jon had finished writing *Match Day* and had just started *Batman*; he'd seen *Knight Lore* and decided that this was the sort of game he wanted to write next. Recognising that he had to take the basic 3D isometric formula and put in something new, Jon realised that improving the graphics was important. An artist was needed to work on the graphics, and Bernie's name sprang to mind.

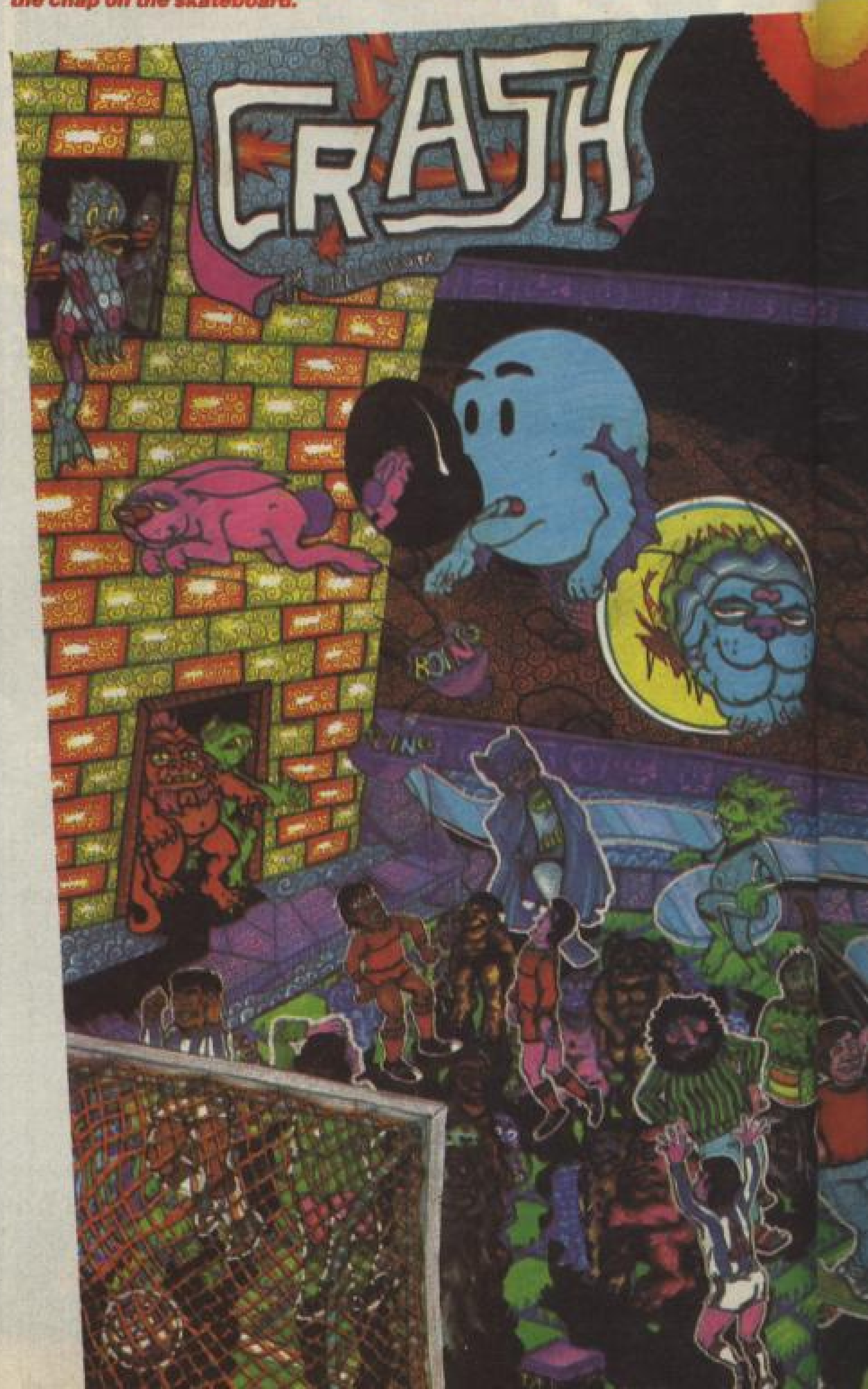
HOME-BREW

Bernie had never seen a computer game in his life, so Jon sat him down in front of *Knight Lore* for a while: "but not for too long, as Jon didn't want me to copy any of the ideas" Bernie remembers. Then Jon loaded up his home-brewed graphics utility and Bernie started doodling.

"There are many things I like about computer graphics but a lot of drawbacks. Normally on paper I never rub anything out; it just has to work first time. But with computer graphics you can spend absolutely hours putting in a pixel and then rubbing it out. You never have to repeat things either – once a sprite is drawn, you can just pick it up again and fiddle around with it." But there are limitations as well. All the graphics have to fit in an area three character blocks high and three block wide. That's 24 pixels square, in other words a little over 500 picture elements in total to play with. That's not much, and Bernie often can't tell what a graphic is going to look like until it is in the game and trotting around.

"Many of the graphics in *Batman* just came about by EX–ORing (superimposing) two bits of graphics over each other, and something would suggest itself to me." Jon gave him a totally free hand with objects and wall decorations. "He never said 'draw me a chair over there' – I'd just come up with something and he'd fit it into the scenario." Most of Bernie's main characters adhere to strict proportions: they are always one-third legs, one-third body and one-third head. Not only does this mean he can try to create new characters by EX–ORing old ones on top of one

A Drummond original just for us at CRASH Towers. Many of Bernie's pictures are drawn as gifts for friends rather than as works of art to keep or sell. The head from HEAD OVER HEALS character bounces over a MATCH DAY game – which seems to be taking place in the middle of a BATMAN room!!! Bernie is the chap on the skateboard.



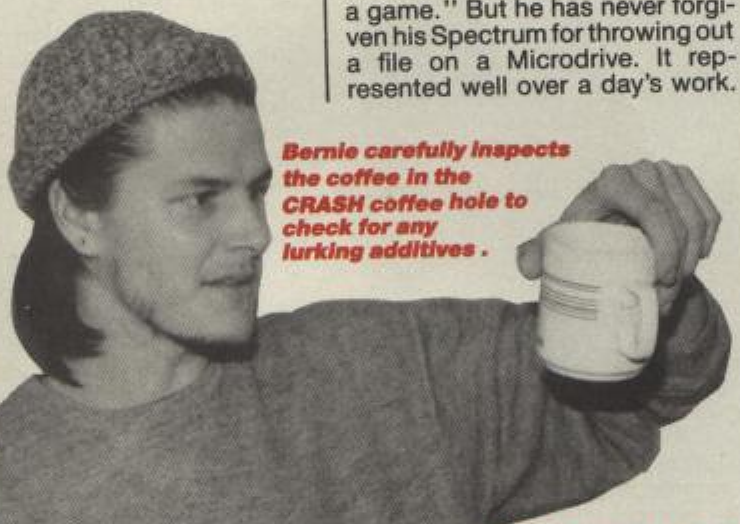
LL
IXELS . . .

another; it also means a character can have a lot of facial detail. *Batman* was licensed, which complicated the development of the graphics somewhat – all Bernie's work had to be approved by the American copyright holders before the finished game could be released.

FREE HAND

Jon is giving Bernie a totally free hand with the graphics for *Head over Heals* (previewed overleaf). The castle theme of the first part of the game came about because Bernie produced a graphic for a suit of armour. So Jon had to stretch the plot a little. Suits of armour in a space fantasy game? Well, obviously the evil Dictator had seen too many old Errol Flynn movies! One of the other planets in the game, the Book World, is full of Western-type graphics, so the film theme runs right through the game.

Bernie lives at home, and at first his parents criticised his eccentric lifestyle – until the cheques started to arrive. "I work in bursts, I'll do virtually nothing and then go totally mad and work round the clock once I've got into a game." But he has never forgiven his Spectrum for throwing out a file on a Microdrive. It represented well over a day's work. He now works on an Amstrad and only transfers his work to the Spectrum to see how it will look.



Bernie carefully inspects the coffee in the CRASH coffee hole to check for any lurking additives .

The batch of Bernie's computer graphics should see the light of day on *Three and In*. The game is being written by **Chris Clarke**, Jon's old *Match Day* collaborator. Chris has been working on this game since he and Jon finished *Match Day*. It's based on the old playground game where some poor sap would be stuck in goal, and his mates would try to score goals. The first to score three goals changed places.

For *Three and In*, Chris plans to allow up to three players to compete at once, one controlling the goalkeeper and the two others taking the defence and attack – controlling two footballers each. When Bernie started working on the game, Chris had the figures moving and Bernie got involved with 'filling them out' – giving them convincing arms and legs.

The screen will look similar to the end-on view of *Handball Maradonna* and *Footballer of the Year* "but hopefully there will be lots more gameplay," Bernie asserts.

MATCH DAY II

All this should come in handy for Jon's next project which should take up where *Match Day* left off. According to Jon there's still plenty of room for a follow up. "I haven't seen anything better than *Match Day* so far. *Super Soccer* was okay if you persevered, but it did have some horrific bugs in it, like when players didn't get up after being fouled." Like all programs, the features that are planned for the follow-up to *Match Day* will be a compromise between desirability and time. "Sliding tackles are nice, but they use a lot of animation to do them properly. More importantly, I'm going to have to make the whole game harder – Bernie can beat the computer on Professional level 22–0." Jon also hopes to improve the way the goalkeeper moves in the sequel to *Match Day*. (A common criticism of *Match Day* is that it is too easy to score by walking the ball into the net, thus avoiding triggering the goalkeeper.)

But then *Match Day* is Bernie's favourite computer game: "it was the first computer game I'd ever played for any length of time, so I was rather spoilt and I tend to be hypercritical of other games. Everything is so realistic, when I show someone the different ways the ball bounces off a player's chest (depending on whether you are moving towards or away from the ball at the time) they don't believe it and think it is just a fluke or a bug. The collision detection is brilliant as well – the ball only bounces when it actually strikes something, instead of when it comes near. The animation is also nicely done. It is important when a player is running, that each foot lands and then stays on the ground while the other foot comes forward. That sounds so obvious, but it's amazing how many sprites you see apparently running on the spot."

A real feeling of depth is created in this collage of cartoon characters and Bernie's own creations. The figures in the background show his latest interest in metallic colours





FOOD, FOOTIE & FUNK!

When he's not playing around with pixels, Bernie has three main interests which verge on the obsessive: music, football and eating. He has a massive collection of records which he leaves all over the place. "I generally only like one or two tracks from an album, so I'll tape those, and then probably take the album round to a friend's house and forget I've left it there. I like a lot of classical music, particularly Prokoviev and Bartok. There's such a lot going on in their music. This band I used to play in had this idea where we'd try and cram as many riffs into a song as possible. The tune might only last a minute or so in the end, but there would be about twenty or thirty different things in there."

In terms of contemporary music, Kate Bush and The Fall feature regularly on the Drummond turntable. Kate Bush's early songs are particular favourites "*The Dreaming* is her best album. She uses music very well: things like sudden silences in just the right place. Once you're in tune with the way she thinks, you always know what note is going to come next."

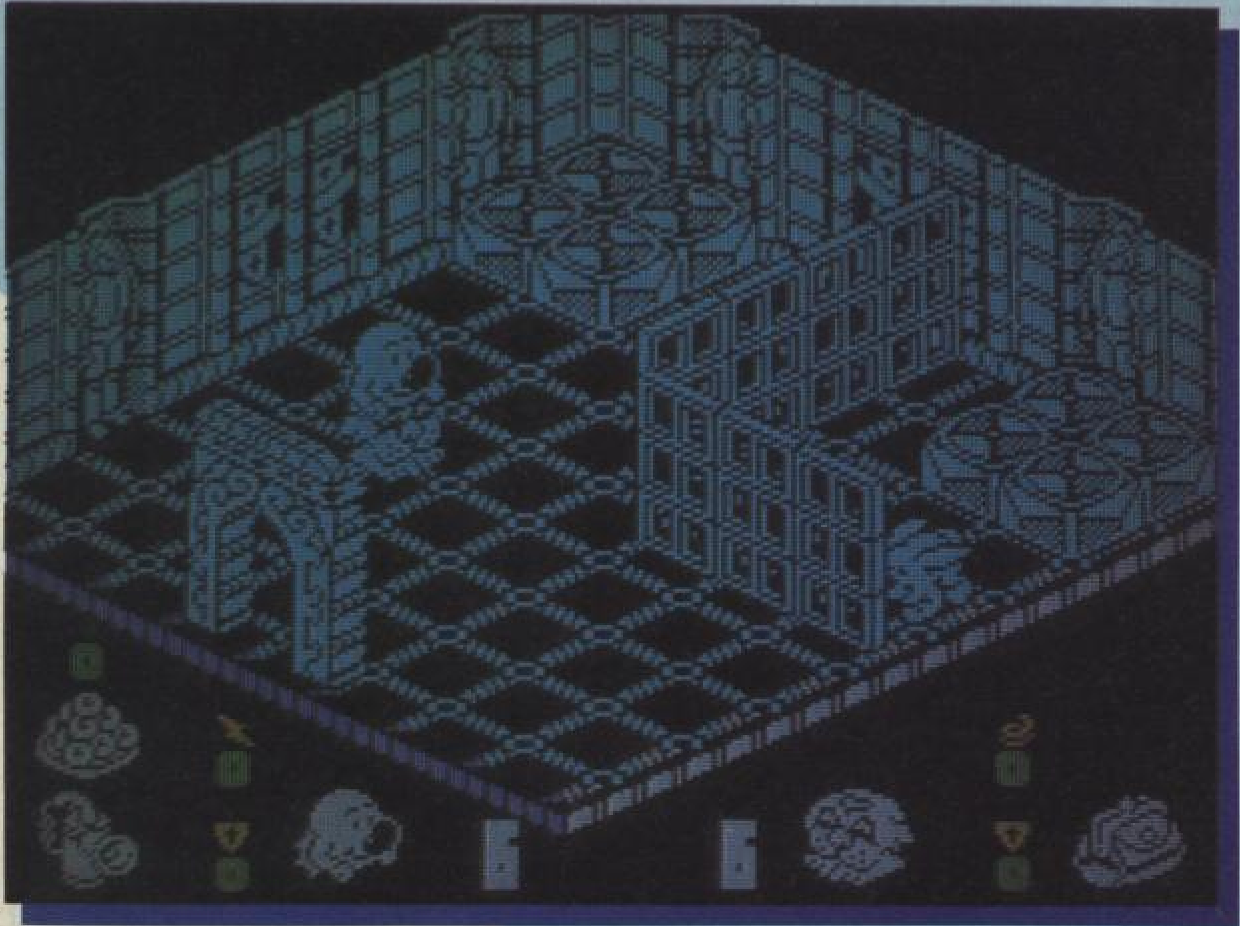
Foodwise, Bernie is very self-sufficient, and is very wary of additives – indeed suspicious. He only trusts the things he prepares himself. Although somewhat evasive about his age (he'll admit to being in his twenties), Bernie believes that his crud-free diet comes in handy when it comes to following his other passion in life, football. When he's not playing football on a computer screen, Bernie's usually running round a field full of younger players – most of his contemporaries (including Jon) feel they're getting a bit too old for the physical rigours of competitive football.

There's obviously a lot to be said for an additive-free diet . . .

PREVIEW

Coming soon to a Spectrum near you!

DESTROY THE BLACKTOOTH EMPIRE!



United they stand . . . Working together, Head and Heals search the castle

The Blacktooth Empire is an uneasy 'alliance' of four planets, ruled by an evil despot from the planet Blacktooth. Without a leader, the downtrodden people of the Empire have been unable to break free from this undemocratic system. It is generally believed that if one of the four Crowns of Leadership stolen by the evil Emperor during the Empire's early days was found, the people would unite under it – and once and for all destroy the evil tyranny. A super agent from the planet Joinedup has been enlisted, and sets out on a quest for the crown.

Joinedup is a strange place: the two species that populate the planet have formed an unusual, symbiotic relationship, with members of one race living on the shoulders of a member of the opposite race. Although they share the same homeland, the separate races have evolved in remarkably different ways. The 'lower order' have developed two feet but no arms – they are speedy runners, but can't jump very high. The other beings, the 'upper-crusties', evolved from birds and have retained rudimentary wings instead of arms – they can jump to twice their own height, and manoeuvre while in mid-air! Combining their respective strengths, the two races work together to achieve things they could never accomplish alone.

The strongest inhabitants of Joinedup, Head and Heals, have united. Together they form the Super Agent chosen for the crown quest. Their mission hasn't started so well however – they've been captured and imprisoned in the Emperor's castle on Blacktooth. This is where you come in. Head and Heals are being kept in different cells and have to escape from the castle, join up again and make their way to Moonbase Headquarters. Having done that, they can return to Blacktooth and continue their search for one of the crowns that will bring liberation to their people.

Head over Heals contains 300 *Batman*-style rooms, shown in 3D isometric projection, and is designed to be played in several parts. Beginners can aim to get out of the castle and return to Joinedup. More experienced players can try to liberate a planet. Eventually, real experts can have a crack at completing the entire mission – but the problems in the last sections of the game are really tough . . .

Memory Fish replace the Bat memory cells found in *Batman*. The fish are RAM save devices, and allow you to return to your game position after losing a life – but a fish only works like this once, and you have to be careful that it is alive and wriggling when you eat it. Dead fish are poisonous.

Head can fire sticky doughnuts from a hooter, and his missiles stun meanies on contact. A bag comes in handy for carrying objects, and cuddly stuffed bunnies temporarily enhance your powers or confer extra lives.

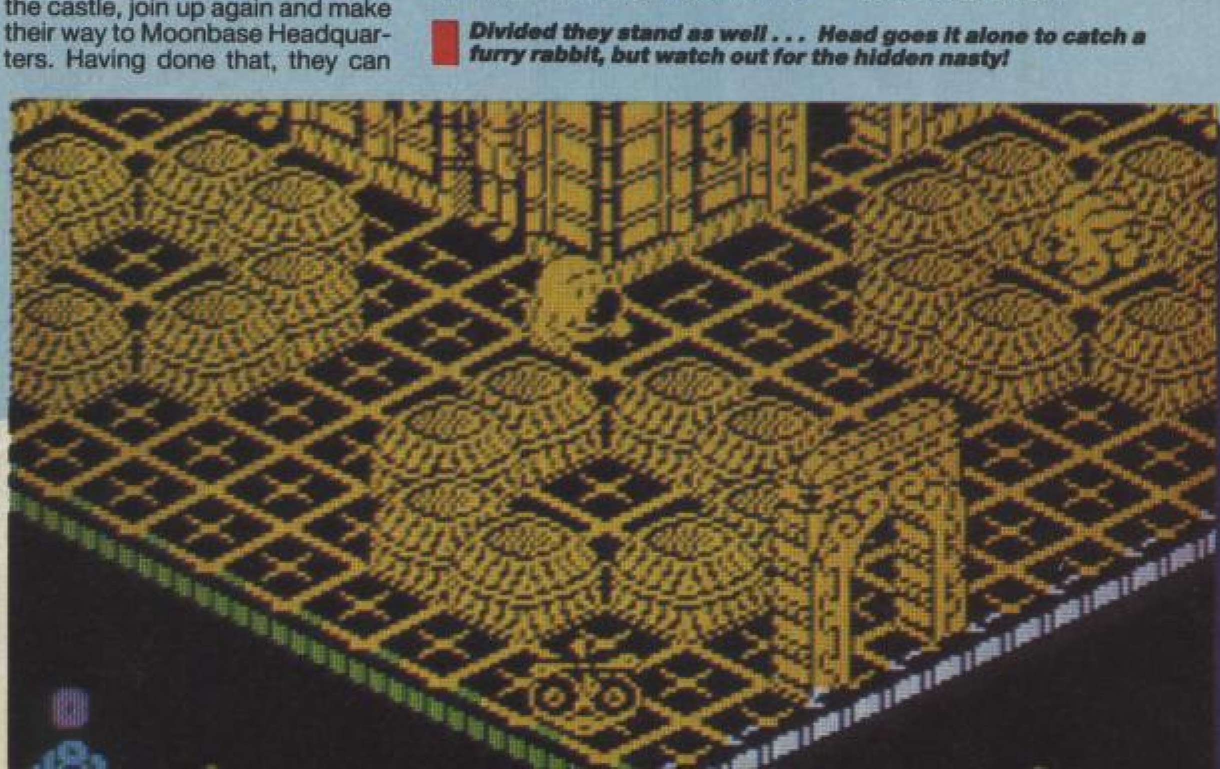
A swap key passes control between Head and Heals when the duo are operating individually, but when they're together the swap key separates them. Some of the problems in the game can only be solved by the composite being, while others need to be approached by Head or Heals working solo.

Bernie Drummond has been busy with the graphics – the two central characters share 13 frames of animation and there are 130 different objects to encounter during play. In total, the graphics data occupies 17K – it looks like Bernie's earned his money putting that lot together!

Head over Heals sees the arrival of a new addition to the Ritman crew. **Guy Stevens** worked on the music which accompanies the Spectrum 128 version – the game loads up, decides whether or not the machine has a sound chip, and selects the appropriate sound routines.

There is no official release date as yet, but *Head over Heals* should be in your local shop by Easter – courtesy of OCEAN.

Divided they stand as well . . . Head goes it alone to catch a furry rabbit, but watch out for the hidden nasty!



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THE GREMLIN EXTRAVAGANZA!

Last year was a good year for GREMLIN GRAPHICS. The GREMLIN team started out with the aim of making the Top Five – in the Software House charts, rather than the game charts. During 1986 a host of respectable games emanated from the Sheffield HQ, and a second programming office was opened in Birmingham where work started on *Gauntlet* for US GOLD. The company eventually achieved their aim, finishing fifth overall according to Bossman **Ian Stuart**.

Now another year has begun, and GREMLIN aim to occupy the Number Three slot when the software houses are ranked at the end of 1987. Plans are afoot to open a third programming office in Derby; a music studio is being set up in Sheffield where top-class Commodore musicians **Rob Hubbard** and **Ben Daglish** are to work; a new mid-price £4.99 label has just been launched with *West Bank* which is soon to be joined by a compilation featuring GREMLIN oldies – *Supersleuth*, *Metabolis*, *Safebreaker* and *Potty Pigeon*; and of course, licence deals are being negotiated. An outline release schedule has been devised for the year with four Spectrum games due this Spring.

A bat and ball game, *Krakout* leads the list of releases – it's due out at the end of February. The game develops on the basic bat 'n' ball theme, adding a number of variables including a character that romps around the screen trying to swallow the ball and spit it out in the most awkward manner possible.

During April, another platform game starring Monty Mole should make its way to the High Street. More of that in a moment . . . A development on the beat 'em up theme in which you have to fight past three levels of opponents using three martial arts, *Samurai*, is promised for the end of February. Karate, Kendo and Samurai sword-fighting all feature, and there is a strategic element to cope with as well as the fighting – three opponents have to be defeated using each combat skill and it's up to the player to choose who to fight next. Once an opponent has been chosen, a brief run-down of his fighting skills and strength is given and it's time to go into training for the big fight!

May should see *Thing II* ready for release – the follow-up to the Commodore hit arcade adventure, *Thing on a Spring*. This time, GREMLIN are going to let Spectrum owners join in the fun, controlling the cute springy hero as he bounces through a factory complex in search of the components he needs to shut it down.

A sequel to *Jack The Nipper* is planned for the summer, and a follow-up to *Bounder* is also on the cards – developing on the ball-game theme. Two of the major licence deals already arranged by Ian Stuart should materialise just in time for the Christmas market: Basil the Mouse Detective should be starring in *Basil of Baker Street*, a puzzle-ridden game along the lines of *Jack The Nipper*, and *MASK* a tie-in based on the hit cartoon series.

But back to Monty Mole's latest adventure . . . *Auf Wiedersehn Monty*. Having escaped from prison in *Monty on the Run*, Monty set up home on Gibraltar believing himself to be safe from the long arm of the law. All went well for a while, but now the international police force INTERMOLE is on his trail and the police are attempting to extradite the miscreant mole. Monty's only hope is to make his way through Europe collecting up enough money to buy a Greek island – only then will he be safe from legal proceedings.

The game is known in the GREMLIN offices as *Pete Harrap's Revenge* – the eighty screens in *Auf Wiedersehn* are packed with puzzles, and nasty twists and turns. Life gets progressively harder as Monty gets deeper into Europe, and towards the end *Auf Wiedersehen* verges on the impossible – Pete is the only person who can play it through at the moment. Monty has six lives at the start of the current development version, and can pick up another six – by the time the game is finished, there may need to be a few more lives available . . .



Starting out from Gibraltar, the furry hero has to make his way through the platform-ridden countries of Europe, performing at least one task in each country. Monty can carry up to four items at a time, and his overall aim is to get enough money into a Swiss bank account to cover the costs of his island sanctuary. Money can be collected in the form of Eurocheques left lying around by careless tourists, but Monty's main source of income is derived from performing tasks. Puns abound in the game – for instance, Monty has to deliver a stolen work of art to a Mafia fence. Yes, it's a fence as in garden that he finds in Italy, home of the mafiosi. Lateral thinking in abundance will be called for if the game is to be solved.

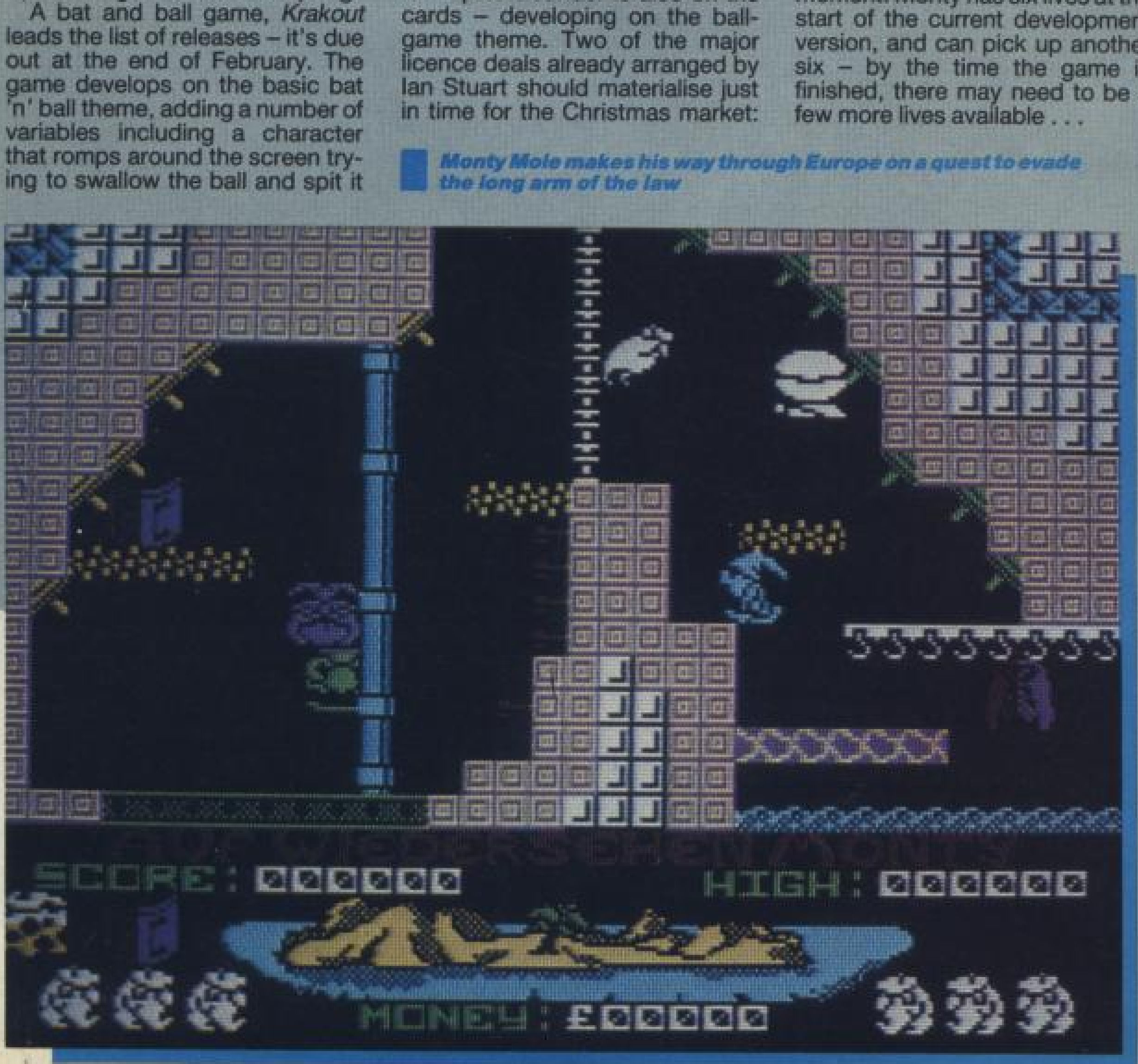
Each country contains at least one airport, and Monty can hop from city to city providing he has an airline ticket in his inventory. When Monty boards a plane, the action switches to a mini-arcade sequence in which the hero mole has to engage an INTERMOLE plane in a dogfight. As you might expect from the devious mind of Pete Harrap, air travel is not straightforward: one airport accepts tickets and refuses to allow Monty to board a plane.

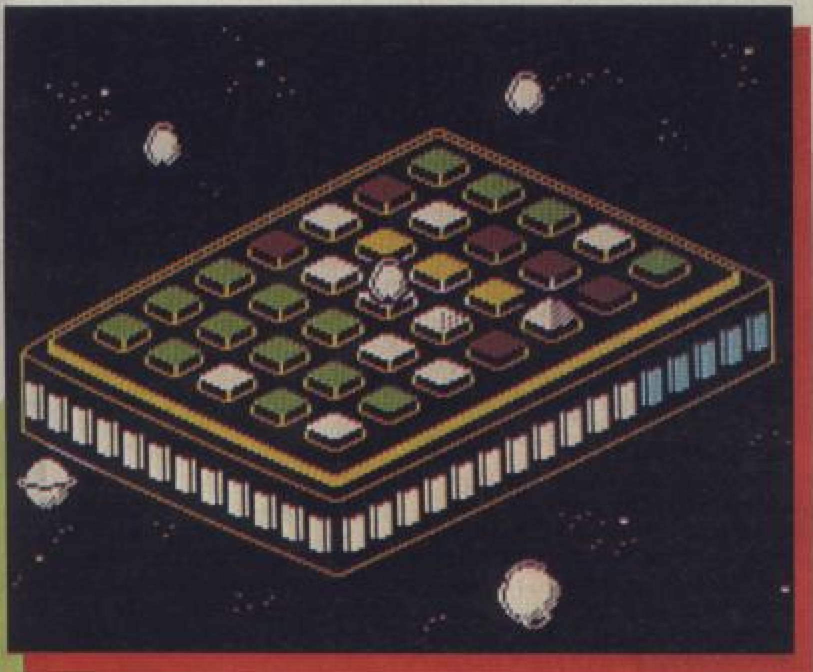
Monty has to complete absolutely every task in the game and collect all of the Eurocheques before he can buy that island paradise – and he has to find the number to his bank account before the money can be stashed away safely.

To make life that little bit more tricky for the player, Mr Harrap has designed half a dozen types of platform. Monty is blown into the air from time to time by one type of ledge, while another has a habit of dissolving beneath his feet. Some platforms are sticky, slowing progress, while others are slippery. And then there are the 'upside-down' platforms that allow Monty to walk along with his feet stuck to their lower surface, like a fly on the ceiling.

Sean Hollingworth is Pete's collaborator on the project, and they hope to add digitised sound effects for the benefit of 128K Spectrum owners: "bone-crunching noises when Monty falls over and some death sounds" they explained with gruesome relish . . .

Monty Mole makes his way through Europe on a quest to evade the long arm of the law





The green switches are inactive, the other switches must be changed before the time scale round the base of the square runs out

SPACE SEPTET

Mike Richardson, author of *Thanatos* and *Turbo Esprit* is busy working on the Spectrum version of *Sigma 7*.

Marauding aliens are trying to take over the galaxy. The only way they can be stopped is if all seven of their three-zone defence levels can be breached. The conflict starts in the inky blackness of space, piloting a Sigma scout ship you have to dispose of waves of enemy fighters. A bonus is awarded when a complete wave is destroyed, and it's on to Phase Two – the factory complex.

Landing the ship on the upper deck, you board a tank and begin a *Pac Man* type game inside the factory. Dots on the floor have to be 'eaten' before the tank can leave the far end of the diagonally-scrolling factory complex. Robo mines home in on your tank and can be evaded or shot, and the factory phase has to be completed within a time limit revealed on a gradually disappearing spiral. When the spiral turns white – indicating that a sufficient number of dots have been cleared – the tank can leave the factory. Some of the dots don't disappear when they are passed over: the pattern of these permanent dots has to be memorised and used in the final phase.

In Phase Three of a level, the pattern formed by the inedible dots in the factory has to be entered on a security lock. A grid of switches greets your tank outside the factory – some switches are inactive, while others can be toggled by passing over them and pressing fire. There's a time limit, and failure to implement the pattern on the switch panel ends the game. Match the pattern, and the lock opens granting access to the space phase of the next level.

An Easter game from DURELL, *Sigma 7* will sell for £7.95.



The start of the Kasserine scenario. With clear weather, the 10th Panzer Division should overrun this weak American tank unit

TUNISIAN TROUBLES

Strategists will be pleased to learn that **Robert Smith**, the man behind *Arnhem* and *Desert Rats* has completed *Operation Vulcan* – Philippa should be able to give it the full treatment in FRONTLINE next month.

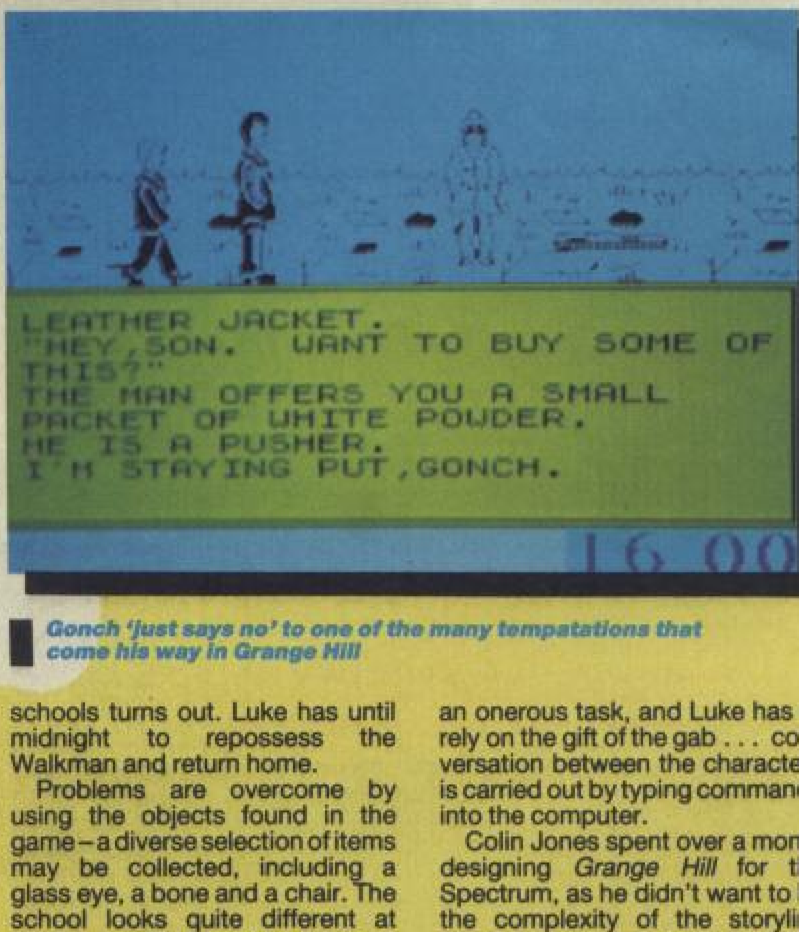
One or two people can participate *Operation Vulcan* – the computerised version of the Tunisian campaign, and the method of play follows on from the format used in Mr Smith's earlier games. Each unit may be moved in turn, crossing terrain, launching assaults, travelling, digging in, or holding position.

Five scenarios cover parts of the battle, and the last scenario covers the entire campaign from November 1942 to May 1943. Play begins with the Axis controlling the whole map – the Allied player wins when the two main Axis ports, Tunis and Bizerta, fall to his troops.

Refinements added by Mr Smith are the inclusion of air units and hidden movement: air units can either be sent on strike missions or on reconnaisance, and an enemy unit that is not in contact with a friendly unit does not appear on the map.

Versions of *Operation Vulcan* are available for the 48K and a 128K machines. Five historical 'what if' options are included in the 128 version, catering for the effect of hypothetical political or military decisions taken outside the campaign.

Ccs are the publishers, and they're asking £9.95.



Gonch 'just says no' to one of the many tempatations that come his way in Grange Hill

SCHOOL TIE-IN

When **Phil Redmond** created Grange Hill in 1976, he could never have dreamed that in eleven years time it would still be one of the most popular Childrens' TV shows. Now ARGUS PRESS SOFTWARE are about to release a computer game based around the famous London school.

The Spectrum implementation of the TV series has been designed by **Colin Jones**, the man who programmed the esoteric *ID* and *Deus Ex Machina*. *Grange Hill* however, is a more familiar arcade adventure with just a hint of strategy. With the creative element taken care of, ARGUS have drafted in the talents of BINARY DESIGN to code the program.

The player guides Luke 'Gonch' Gardener on the trail of a missing personal stereo. The plot goes something like this: Luke's Walkman has been confiscated and stored in the staffroom. Some time ago Luke's other Walkman was stolen while in the staffroom, so now his Mum always asks to see it when he comes home from school. If she finds out that it has been impounded again, Luke is in deep trouble.

With his partner in crime Paul 'Hollo' Holloway, Luke decides to return to the school after hours to try and filch the Walkman back. The game begins at 3.50pm when schools turns out. Luke has until midnight to repossess the Walkman and return home.

Problems are overcome by using the objects found in the game – a diverse selection of items may be collected, including a glass eye, a bone and a chair. The school looks quite different at night – making it hard for the boys to find their way about. Beware of the caretaker or the trouble-maker Imelda Davies. Drug pushers also make an appearance and try to hinder the lads – following on from the anti-drugs theme to the TV series, it's wise to say 'No' to pushers. Persuading Hollo to be in the right place at the right time is an onerous task, and Luke has to rely on the gift of the gab . . . conversation between the characters is carried out by typing commands into the computer.

Colin Jones spent over a month designing *Grange Hill* for the Spectrum, as he didn't want to let the complexity of the storyline interfere with the flavour of the television programme. Grange Hill fans can gain added entertainment inbetween TV episodes towards the end of February, when ARGUS plan to have the game in the shops, priced at £9.95.

WHERE EAGLES DARE

During the Second World War, many daring deeds were carried out by the special forces. None was more daring than that carried out on The Eagles Nest. German troops were known to be massing there – the powers that be wanted to know why.

Four men penetrate the castle, but three are quickly captured. Our hero is the only one to remain free, and with the guards on the alert it's going to be a tough mission. Now our hero will not only have to finish the mission and blow up the castle, but he'll also have to rescue his three buddies.

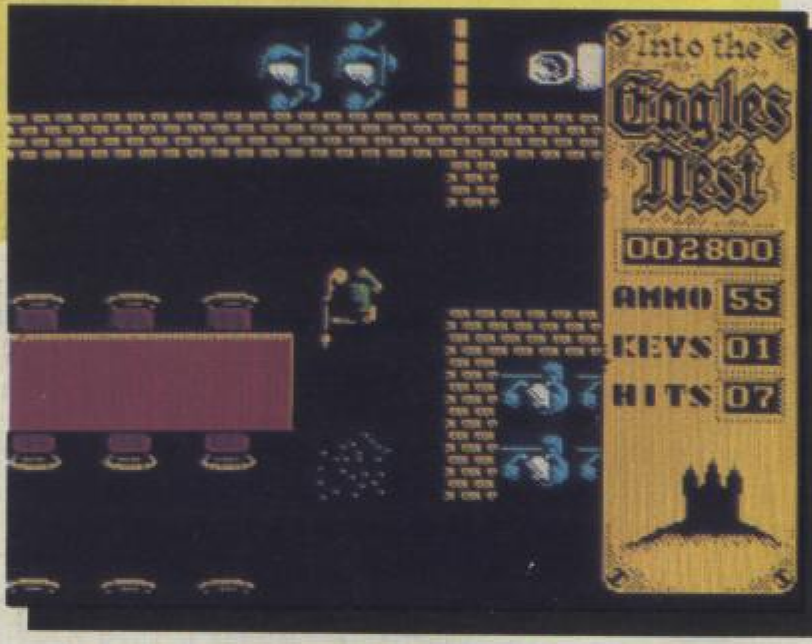
It's a sort of '*Gauntlet* meets *Commando*' type of game. Our hero tromps around each floor of the castle, which is viewed from above and scrolls in four directions. He picks up keys to open doors, shoots the swarms of German guards and picks up useful goodies.

His Sten gun comes with 99 rounds. Things get tough when these run out, so collecting more ammo is a priority. Every time he gets shot, or bumps into a guard, he takes a number of hits – too many of these and our hero snuffs it. There are first-aid kits scattered around the place to staunch the flow of blood and reduce the number of injuries.

Completing the mission means getting to the top floor of the castle, collecting and placing the explosive charges and rescuing your mates. Our hero must be careful and not just storm around Sten gun blazing, as bullets do not stop at the edge of the screen, and a stray bullet might set off an explosive charge.

Bonus points are scored for picking up the baubles which are scattered around the castle floor.

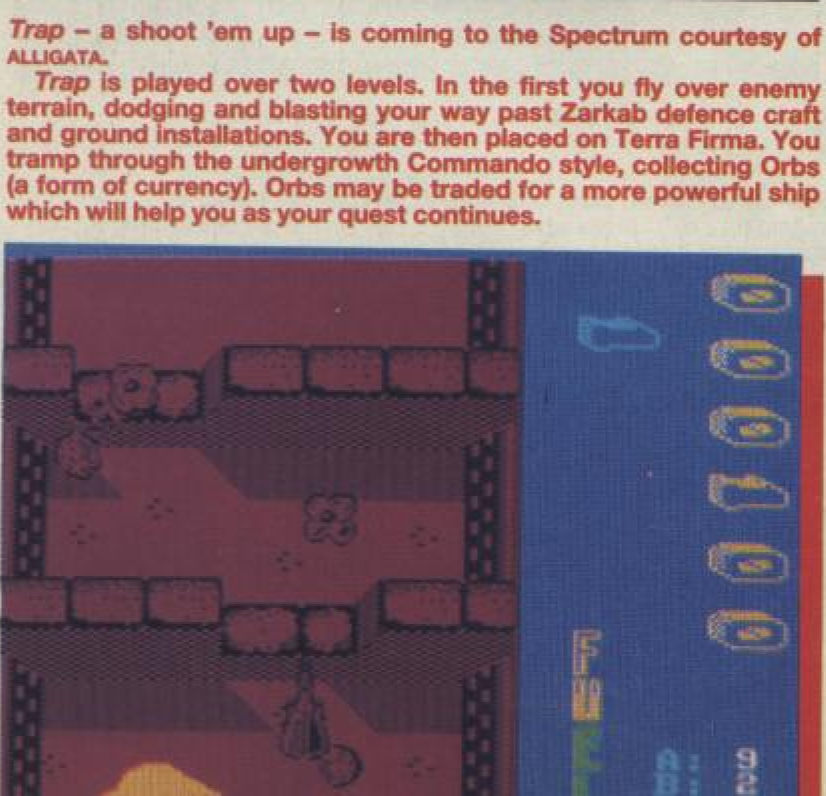
Into the Eagles Nest will be coming out on a new label, **PANDORA** which is yet another name to emerge from **INTERCEPTOR.**

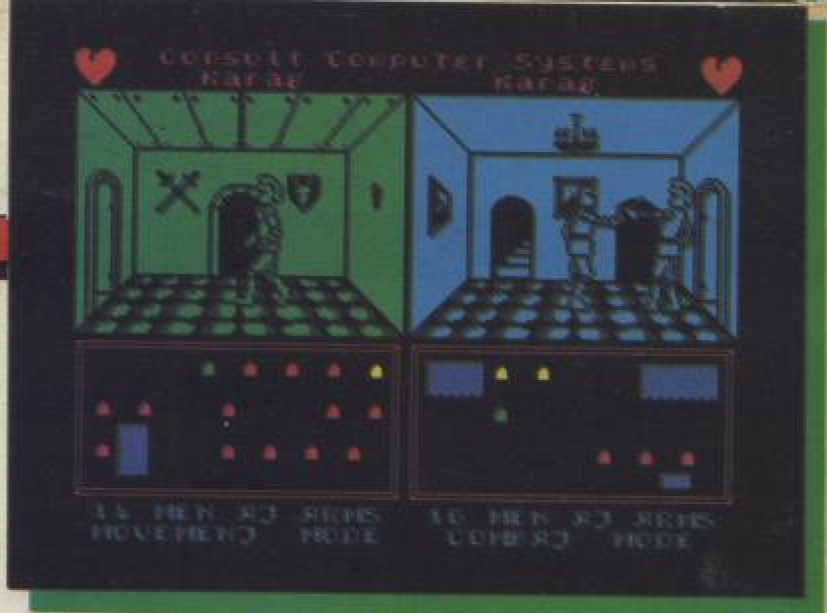


The Eagles Nest comes with all mod cons, conference table, W.C. and hot and cold running Germans – our hero has just dealt with another

Trap – a shoot 'em up – is coming to the Spectrum courtesy of **ALLIGATA.**

Trap is played over two levels. In the first you fly over enemy terrain, dodging and blasting your way past Zarkab defence craft and ground installations. You are then placed on Terra Firma. You tramp through the undergrowth Commando style, collecting Orbs (a form of currency). Orbs may be traded for a more powerful ship which will help you as your quest continues.





The blue faction get stuck in to a neutral knight hoping to take him over, while on the left, the green knight stomps around exploring

THRONES OF FIRE

It's been a long time since Mike Singleton fans have had much to cheer about – rumours of *Star Trek* and *Eye of the Moon* notwithstanding. So while the faithful wait for the next game written by the great man himself, perhaps a game designed by him might suffice.

The game is *Throne of Fire* and the unlikely source is **MELBOURNE HOUSE**, enjoying their first association with Mr Singleton. Programming was carried out by **CONSULT COMPUTERS.**

King Atherik is dead, and three factions are fighting for control of the Throne of Fire. This struggle is set in the Burning Citadel, which is built around the rim of a smouldering volcano.

Two players take a joystick each, with the computer controlling the third faction, or one player can take on two computer opponents. In addition, there is also a neutral force whose soldiers try to bar the way to the Throne.

Each faction has a leader, which the player controls, and an army of supporters. The leader travels from room to room, discovering magic objects and weapons. He can also attack men from opposing factions.

The screen is split vertically between the two human players. The top part shows the main character travelling through the castle. A fight ensues when he encounters an enemy, the two knights then get stuck in with their swords in the following animated fight sequence. The bottom section shows how the rest of the faction is doing in the fight to control the citadel. Windows light up in the different player's colours as they gain control of the rooms.

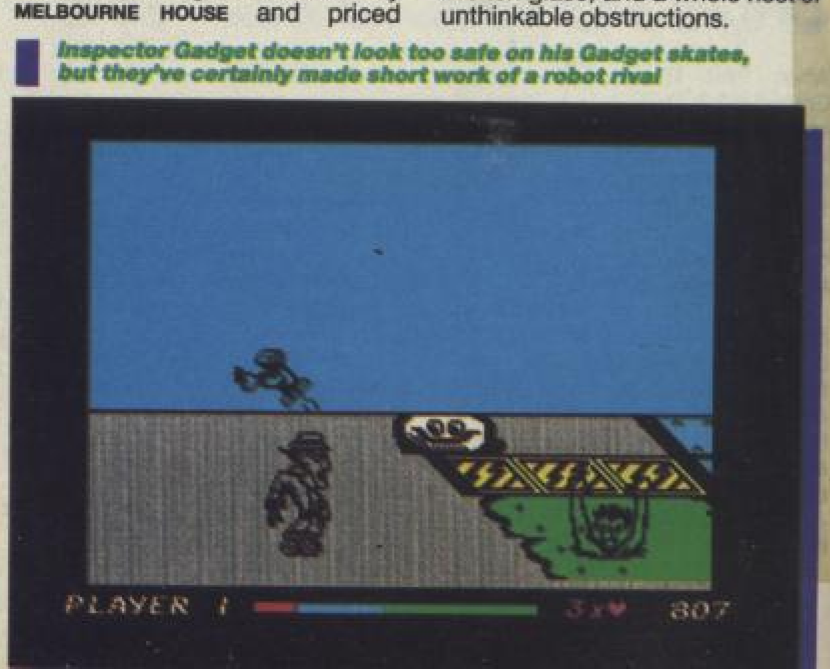
INSPECTOR GADGET AND THE CIRCUS OF FEAR

Inspector Gadget started his investigative career on television over in la belle France. He's the barmy detective whose limbs extend into whirring gizmos at the merest shout of 'Go, Go Gadget legs' . . . or whatever.

Inspector Gadget crossed the channel to star on our own TV last autumn, and soon he's to appear in a computer game released by **MELBOURNE HOUSE** and priced £8.95.

The nefarious M.A.D agents are up to their old tricks. This time they've planted bombs all over a circus. Inspector Gadget with his beserk appendages has been drafted in to defuse them. But before Inspector Gadget gets to the circus he has to negotiate a road infested with snakes, pits and broken glass, and a whole host of unthinkable obstructions.

Inspector Gadget doesn't look too safe on his Gadget skates, but they've certainly made short work of a robot rival





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4
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